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Plants, Pools, and Pavilions: 16th Century Safavid Garden Paintings and Expressions of Authority

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Plants, Pools, and Pavilions: 16th Century Safavid Garden Paintings and Expressions of Authority

by

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“Know that knowledge is the most illuminating star that shines over the moon of human nature. It is the most precious flower that blossoms in the garden of human reality.”

-Shaykh Muhammad ‘Ali Mu‘adhdhin Sabzawari Khurasani

Dedication

To my parents, for their constant love, support, and free food.

To Meems and Grandma, for encouraging me to become yet another tough lady in our family.

To Liz, Lexie, Catalina, Jenna, Rachel, Katherine, and Clarence for never tiring of my complaints and believing I could do it when even I wasn't so sure.

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Abstract

Plants, Pools, Pavilions: 16th Century Safavid Garden Paintings and Expressions of Authority

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In the realm of Persian manuscript painting, gardens and their associated structures are rarely endowed with a purpose in the scene's larger narratives. However, the addition of various plant forms and built spaces within the garden instead function within essential Safavid ideals about sovereignty and the landscape. Looking specifically at a pair of 16th-century paintings originating from Qazvin, I argue that landscapes are not simply beautiful, but that depictions of these complex spaces indicates a mastery over nature, function to legitimize rulers and their territory, and operate within a distinctly Safavid conception of kingship. By examining the conditions of Safavid Qazvin politically, and the way gardens functioned within such a society, I connect painted gardens to their physical counterparts in the late-1500s, and to larger ways these paintings aided Safavid goals in affirming empire and solidifying cultural identity. These scenes are deliberately delightful and referential of the ideal—but they are also part of a larger cultural program aimed at creating and embellishing on the social fabric of Persian cities.

Through the course of this thesis, I take a closer look at what is and is not included in the landscaped ‘background’, and why these choices are part of a larger conversation that should preclude them from their seeming status in the shadows.

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Introduction

An early modern Persian empire, the Safavids ruled from about 1501 to 1722 CE. At the heart of the empire's longevity was its priority of inclusivity--on every level, the Safavids were juggling the interests not only of themselves, but also those of their constituents. At its greatest extent, the Safavid Empire stretched over all of modern-day Iran, as well as parts of Iraq, Turkey, and Georgia. It reached from the borders of the Persian Gulf, up to the Caspian Sea, almost encroaching on the Black Sea. They were distinctly Shi'a in religion, a branch of Islamic exegesis that believes religious legitimacy should have transferred, after the death of the Prophet, via the prophet's son-in-law, Ali, as part of the prophet's divinely sanctioned lineage. This is in opposition to Sunni Islam (now the world majority), which is opposed to succession based on the Prophet's bloodline. The Safavids established Shi'ism as the official religion of the empire, but the empire was also Sufi in its origins. Sufism is Islamic mysticism. Similar to Jewish Kabbalah, it is an aspect of Islam that was practiced by Muslims of varying sectarian persuasions. As such, the Safavids were both Shi'a and Sufi.

This pair of paintings, created around 1570 to 1580 CE, were most likely created in the period of Shah Tahmasp's reign. After the death of his father, Shah Ismail, Tahmasp ascended the throne at the young age of 10. Tahmasp ruled from around 1524 to 1576 CE. With the death of the revered Ismail and a young, easily influenced child taking the throne, the Safavids entered a period of political turmoil and uncertainty. At the rise of Shah Tahmasp, a civil war lasting more than a decade ensued. It was less a question of the legitimacy of the Safavids themselves, but more a debate on how various ethno-

religious interest groups would arrange themselves around this new and impressionable ruler. These challenges are important to understand, as the Keir Collection paintings were eventually created under the same Tahmasp who faced these near constant challenges to his authority.

Responding to these challenges and criticisms, Tahmasp's kingship proved to be one that performed itself on the materiality of the city. Demonstrations of power, reverence or legitimacy were lived and written, and were unavoidable in Safavid daily life. Architecture and public works projects were the way rulers wrote their name in the fabric of the city. Life was about seeing and being seen. When a Safavid ruler had a message to send, they often delivered it via public space. Actualized, physical spaces are how the Safavids affirmed themselves in positive times, and how they reiterated their power during troubled periods. The Safavids were building spaces within the landscape, including cultivated gardens, which served as a reminder of their control. Shah Tahmasp's move of the Safavid capital to the city of Qazvin was initiated with the construction of the Sa'adatabad Gardens. The construction of this garden helped announce a new political era for the Safavids. Architecture and the landscape were utilized hand-in-hand in order to send a message to the public about a changing political climate.

Although there are many figures in each side of the painting, my primary concern is with the flora and other garden features present in the scene, and what they may offer to an audience generally trained to look past such details. In viewing these two paintings from Qazvin, the foliage and garden in the two pages are anything but solely supplement.

In studying the physical landscape of Safavid Iran, the painted garden functions similarly in affirming authority and power.

Chapter 1: The Safavid Empire

Painting is a renowned aspect of the patronage by Safavid kings and many examples are found today throughout the world in various collections. In the noted Keir Collection, now at the Dallas Museum of Art, are two interesting examples dating from the late 16th-century from a now dispersed manuscript. They are credited to an artist named Bahram Quli. In the Keir Collection's description of the paintings, they are presented as a scene of revelry honoring a prince on his throne, who is seen on the right. The catalogue (as the only write-up on the pieces) points out within the court scene a "pavilion with attendants and ladies at the upper windows."[1] In the foreground, people gather, preparing a meal with meat roasting on a spit. On the left, the catalogue notes the courtyard filled with "envoys bringing gifts of cloth, bows, and a horse."[2] Just above the courtyard, a pair of gardeners is at work, and at the top of the scene, young men frolic in a pair of smaller pavilions connected by a pool.[3] This description points out some of the major elements of the paintings, but does not complete the picture.

What is present is emphasized by what is absent in the report--in this case, a garden scene is described without any mention of the plants or landscape elements present. These Safavid images are not unusual in that they are set in an outdoor space. In fact, gardens and plant life feature prominently in the majority of art from the Safavid reign (about 1501 to 1722). Ordinarily, however, as is the case of the description for the

[1] B.W. Robinson, ed. *Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book*. London: Faber, 1976. P. 189.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

two Qazvin paintings--the garden and its components are rarely the subjects of stand-alone research.

Not only are garden features significant players in Safavid scenes, they also evoke something of Safavid lived spaces. Similar to the way gardens were carefully designed by the Safavids, but with even more of an idea of permanence and calculation, painted gardens such as those within the Qazvin scenes are not an accident of embellishment. They carry precisely calculated messages about rulers, power, legitimacy, and lived dynamics of contemporaneous society. Yes, painted gardens are beautiful, but they are also communicative. Both artists and wealthy patrons had a vested interest in their artistic creation and design.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SAFAVIDS

At the time of these paintings, the Safavid Empire was plagued by conflict both inside and outside of their realm. The beginning of the empire is generally dated to 1501, when Ismail captured the city of Tabriz.[4] The Safavid empire was varied in terms of ethnic communities. These peoples included Qizilbash tribes, Turks, and Tajiks, all with varied interests. Building alliances with these groups allowed the Safavids to avoid major internal threats to the throne, as well as providing support against outside usurpers such as the Ottoman and Uzbek neighboring tribes. But these were not merely lip-service alliances--the success of the Safavids relied upon creating an image that projected power and rulership, but also one that demonstrated respect towards majority religions and

[4] Andrew J Newman. *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*. London: Tauris, 2009. P. 2.

traditions of their diverse constituents. In the words of scholar Andrew Newman, even before a Safavid Iran, the region was at the center of many trade routes and had an established history of coexistence between cultures, ethnicities, and religions.[5] In order to survive, the Safavids staked their history on a kingship that was recognizable not just for its authority, but also for its tolerance.

Religiously, the Safavid Empire was both Sufi and Sunni, and eventually became invested in converting its subjects to Shi'ism. Their Sufi origins are something they would carry with them throughout even the dying days of their order, centering ideas of rulers who also functioned as divine figures. This transformation led the Safavids to embrace the creation of a new religio-political discourse that encapsulated the veneration of Twelver Shi'i imams. After capturing Tabriz (with the help of a group of majority Turkman Shi'a skilled warriors called the Qizilbash, who would continue to be influential to Safavid policy), founder Ismail would go on to declare Twelver Shi'ism as the official faith of the empire, a departure from their previous Sunni origins. This transition also served to differentiate their empire from the neighboring Ottomans.[6] The Ottomans, however, were not the only threat to the Safavids--Uzbeks were to the Northeast, and would prove to be yet another persistent threat. In addition to the conversion's function in creating a distinct marker of identity, Shah Ismail prompted the conversion to Shi'a Islam to aid the empire's promulgation across land. With a cohesive institution of religion that formed a strong identity separate from the Ottoman, Safavids were able to expand over

[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

land as one homogenous unit. As part of the religious shift to official Twelver Shi'ism, Ismail also invited Shi'i religious figures to reside across the lands he controlled, spreading the faith's practices among different communities. Perhaps more important than the visiting clerics' duties in teaching was their function in encouraging a public perception of Ismail as both truly part of the Shi'i imam lineage and as the new guardian of faith. At the same time as Ismail was establishing Shi'ism for the realm, he was also establishing himself as the defender of this new faith and as a figure with the God-given right to this position.

At Ismail's death, his young son, Tahmasp, inherited the throne. He was only nine years old.[7] With the death of the revered Ismail and a young, easily influenced child taking the throne, the Safavids entered another period of political turmoil and uncertainty. Ismail had, after all, positioned himself as the messenger of God on earth, and as the spokesman for the interests of many different ethnic and social groups. At his passing, many groupings felt nervous and uncertain about how their best interests would continue to be served by the government. At the rise of Shah Tahmasp, a civil war lasting more than a decade ensued. It was less a question of the Safavids themselves, but more a debate on how Turk and Tajik (namely) interests would arrange themselves around this new and impressionable ruler. The following Keir Collection paintings were eventually created under the same Tahmasp who faced these near-constant challenges to his authority, and who never escaped from the pressure to declare his rule just. Immediately following Ismail's death, a Rumlu challenge also emerged (another Turkoman tribe).

[7] Ibid.

Quite early in Tahmasp's kingship, a march against the royal homes in Isfahan also took place, and competing groups framed a Shamlu (one of the strongest of the Qizilbash tribes) chief in a plot to poison Sam Mirza, Tahmasp's half-brother, in an attempt to further their own interests and rise to the throne. Far from being the end of Tahmasp's early struggles, this cycle of poisonings, insurgencies, and reappointments marked an opportunity for outside tribes who wanted to capitalize on this extended period of internal disorganization.

While Tahmasp was occupied executing Shamlu leaders, the Uzbeks launched five attacks between the years of 1524 and 1540.[8] Not to be left out, the Ottoman forces began two campaigns into Safavid territory during the time the young prince was occupied at his home. They were ultimately able to make headway, seizing the capital city of Tabriz in 1535, followed by the conquest of Baghdad and all of Iraq in 1538.[9] In 1553, the Safavids began to pursue legal peace with the Ottoman and the result was the Treaty of Amasya. Although it remained one of Tahmasp's greatest shames, the treaty recognized Ottoman sovereignty over Iraq and Mesopotamia. It is due to this surrender of land that the capital of the Safavid empire was moved to the city of Qazvin, where the two Keir Collection paintings were created.

Young Tahmasp, even after this strategic capital move, was surrounded by advisors from different ethnic and religious groups who were jostling for the ear of the king. With Tahmasp welcoming (or perhaps, being forced to welcome) some degree of

[8] Ibid.
[9] Newman, p. 28.

the power and authority of varying tribesmen during his time as ruler, some religious power in the Safavid territories was held in the hands of tribes and at provincial levels. Overall, tribes possessed autonomy in local affairs. Tahmasp, attempting to solidify his house as well as his own role began creating marriage alliances. He himself was the son of a Mawsillu (another Turcoman tribe) woman, and his principal wife (and mother of two of his children) was Mawsillu.[10] His daughters were given to others in Safavid houses, in an attempt to prevent uprisings against him. Other key posts were also given to family members, like his son Ismail II who was made governor of Shirvan.[11]

Inside Tahmasp's central administration, the Tajik tribe held a continued presence. Contemporary court writers note the Tajik acceptance of the Safavid claims to *sayyid* status (or direct descendance from Muhammad, and thus special spiritual status) within Shi'ism.. In some cases, Tajiks wrote their support of Tahmasp on the city itself, signaling the significance of public spaces that could function as political platforms. In 1543, one noble built a mosque dedicated to "most just, the most noble, the shadow of Allah to the faithful...Sultan Shah Tahmasp", while the same year, another noble built the Dhul-Fiqar mosque [whose] inscription dates the building to 'the days of the caliphate of the most just Sultan...Shah Tahmasp.'"[12] Shah Tahmasp, Turks, Tajiks, and other various tribes were part of a collective conversation in this period in which all parties were vying for power and autonomy by utilizing public works to send a message to their peers about who deserved to lead the empire.

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, p. 30.

A KINGLY PERSPECTIVE

The Safavids were centered in their expansionist and empirical ambitions, and this outlook affected how the Shahs viewed themselves and their goals. The Safavid population was, again, varied in every sense—most Safavid constituents practiced some form of Islam, although there was largely no one Islamic practice that was mandated. More diverse than its religious practices was the Safavid ethnic composition: "the country was populated by Persians, Turks, and Arabs, in addition to a number of smaller, less prominent groups such as Baluchis, Kurds, Lurs, Turkmen, Circassians, and Lezghis."[13] The empire was multilingual, although Persian was the court language, as well as the language of the common culture. The Safavids very much possessed a mindset focused on the expansion of their realm and the control of all their varied subjects.

Connecting to ideas of Safavid Sufism and how kingship functioned, the Safavids were familiar with a "dominant experience of sacred authority [that] was concrete and embodied rather than abstract and textual."[14] This is rooted in the nature of the Safavid's Sufi kingship practice, wherein shahs were viewed as saints and messiahs rather than mere political or economic leaders. As the Safavid order was Sufi in its origins, Tahmasp's father, Isma'il, certainly capitalized on his inherited status as a both a religious leader and protector of the empire. To his followers, "he was Ali reborn and divine."[15] He was the physical incarnation of Ali, the continuation of the Prophet's line and work. As such, he himself was inherently holy. As Sufism grew across the Eastern

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[13] Ibid, p. 240.
[14] Azfar Moin. *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. P. 5.
[15] Ibid, p. 76.

Islamic lands, so too did the status of shahs. The veneration of the shah grew in strength, with one legend being that the soldiers of Shah Ismail ran into battle confidently, without armor, because they expected the divine nature of their king to provide the protection.[16] It was even said that in battle or on royal camping grounds soldiers prayed towards Shah Ismail rather than Mecca; his physical presence a more firm guarantee of God's favor than the holiest, albeit distant, location.[17] As for Ismail's part, his interests in Sufi mysticism extended towards astrology as well. He relied on court astrologists to predict the outcome of battles and more, as did his contemporary Babur to the east. Just as it was significant for Safavid rulers to express that they were masters of nature, it was equally important for them to demonstrate their understanding of it. Ismail, and additionally Tahmasp after him, trusted that nature held some control over their reign, and the shah and the earth were constantly engaged in a respectful dialogue on power. A happy life both on and after earthly life was a gateway the Safavids guarded.

While Tahmasp and his Persian court contemporaries were looking towards their Achaemenid ancestor Cyrus for inspiration on how to build their gardens, they were also looking towards the Achaemenids for ways to create the architecture of kingship in general. The fame of the Safavid court and its interest in paying homage to the past even spread to Europe. European traveler Johann von Erlach, after visiting Safavid Persia, wrote home to Emperor Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor, that they must "build the new royal palace...in the same way as Persepolis...so that His Majesty may sit [Charles VI] --

[16] Ibid, p.4.
[17] Ibid.

like Cyrus overlooking his empire."[18] The Safavids made their concepts of kingship viewable and unavoidable, sending a clear message about who owned and controlled the city.

These ideas of Safavid Shahs, specifically Ismail and Tahmasp, as both the defender of the natural and political world is a key feature of their distinct religious-political outlook. The Prophet is quoted as stating "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate", a statement used by the Safavids to support the Shi'a belief that Ali is indeed the heir to the Prophet's religious domain.[19] Following this example, Shah Ismail, Tahmasp's father, called himself the "the opener of gates", and was noted by many contemporaneous travelers to the Safavid world for his superhuman status to his subjects.[20] Tahmasp would follow in the footsteps of his father, viewed as a godlike figure to his subjects rather than a mortal monarch. His "Edicts of Sincere Repentance" (the first in 1556) followed challenging historic periods for the empire, such as the Treaty of Amasya, and these renewed dedications to religion during difficult political times linked his religious actions as Shah to the fate of Iran. Ismail was the opener of gates, and perhaps Tahmasp was the shah who would continue to build them.

Perhaps it could be said that society was constructed as a stage upon which the ruler both viewed and directed performances. In this way, the architectural history of a city is the practice of exploring personal histories, examining who created which structure, and why. Controlling the semiotics of a city was a statement of guardianship

[18] Ibid, p. 183.
[19] Newman, p. 19.
[20] Newman, p. 23.

over life, both creating a space marked by a king and reflecting on the king's very power to send such messages. Palaces and cities often functioned as one unit, gradually transitioning into one another, and gardens and palaces shared this same symbiotic relationship. Both public and private spaces were designed with practical goals and achieved with a sense of aesthetics.

The Safavids maintained this power structure that required an element of performance. Theirs was a "legitimacy dependent on a display of royal splendor (or *farr*[21])", a rulership that required an audience. In much the same conceptual manner as the pavilions seen in the Safavid garden images and also physical gardens, rulers and their courts were presented in a sort of bubble--seemingly transparent and within reach, but with boundaries still existing nonetheless. Kingship was to be observed, but never shared. Although the walls of a pavilion may be low in height, or the bars of a garden gate sparse, the spaces are still defined and relate to social and economic class. Much like the walled garden itself, these boundaries exist in part to visually remind society who does and doesn't fall within them. Just as in the painted versus physical garden, Safavid politics thrived off of the tension between what is real, and what is ideal.

Relating to the Keir images, the court scene, in example, is most immediately [figure 2] one of feasting. Feasting spaces were designed for interaction with the king, and the culture that developed around them served a distinctly Persian idea about the all-encompassing power of rulers. Guests were seated hierarchically, descending in status as

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[21] Kavita Singh. *Real Birds in Imagined Gardens: Mughal Painting between Persia and Europe*. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2017. P. 56.

they descended literally from the throne. Feasting was a “micro universe of social action”, part of the performative nature of Safavid kingship that mandated an audience in order to be effective.[22] As Sussan Babaie has noted, foreign visitors to the court of Shah Tahmasp would take note of this social organization: “the king gave audience in his 'pavilion' in the centre of the garden, his throne surrounded by four layers of spectators who sat in an order dictated by their rank...those who were more honoured had parasols to protect them from the sun.”[23]. As in the geography of Qazvin itself, the social organization of the Safavids was deeply rooted in their relationship relative to topography. Thus, even a seemingly obvious image of celebration such as the Qazvin court scene reveals itself to be deeply entrenched in political ideology. Private gardens were frequently sites of administrative affairs and host to all manner of diplomatic events. Anywhere there was feasting, there were politics.

[22] Sussan Babaie. *Isfahan and its Palaces: Statecraft, Shiism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran*. S.l.: EDINBURGH UNIV PRESS, 2018. P. 224.
[23] Ibid.

Chapter 2: Garden Historiography and Reality

Traditionally, private Islamic gardens have been viewed largely through a religious lens. The aesthetic program for gardens in the Islamic world has been evaluated on Quranic verse and paradisiacal interpretation. In 1976, Dumbarton Oaks collected various colloquia on the history of landscape architecture, edited by Elisabeth B. MacDougall and Richard Ettinghausen.[24] In these relatively early years of research on the Islamic garden, most papers are eager to connect the physical garden to the idea of the heaven in the afterlife; a reward for the faithful. In the opening paper, by Annemarie Schimmel, she notes that "the Koran has promised the faithful the blessings of eternal gardens, gardens which are the greatest delight for the inhabitants of arid zones, where every inch of green is most welcome."[25] According to Schimmel, the idea of "utmost felicity,"[26] or God's greatest favor, is conveyed through green spaces and water. The idea of 'heaven' in the Quran is a space "underneath which rivers flow,"[27] a phrase that occurs more than 30 times in the Quran to describe paradise. Scholars note that the Islamic garden was filled with "sensuous beauty,"[28] a term that seems almost as unavoidable as 'exotic' within the earlier days of Persian art history.

The idea of the lived garden as the divine gardens of paradise, and thus their inseparable nature from a religious discourse, still continues over 50 years later. In 1996,

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[24] Elisabeth B. MacDougall, and Richard Ettinghausen. *The Islamic Garden*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1976.
[25] Annemarie Schimmel.*The Celestial Garden*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1976. P. 13.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid, p. 15.
[28] Ibid, p. 17.

Emma Clark wrote on Islamic gardens in a book titled *Underneath Which Rivers Flow*--the title itself, of course, a reference to Quranic paradise. She presents the physical landscape as signs of God in the natural world, or the way "God makes clear his love for you [the believer]."[29] These reviews of gardens all hinge on ideas of the Arab lands as dry, arid, and brown. They represent a large amount of scholarly and non-scholarly writing that discusses gardens only in terms of the Quran.

Regarding these approaches to Islamic gardens, Stephennie Mulder writes, "one of the most frequently repeated tropes in Islamic studies is that of the central role of water in the arid lands of the Islamic world".[30] While water is sometimes rare in Iran, this is true for very many early human settlements. Mulder points out that while the climate may be dry in places, the Islamic lands (wherever you draw their borders throughout history) are anything but homogenous. What these exoticizing ideas about water scarcity rest on, naturally, is the special significance attached to water by Western secondary scholars throughout history. Water thus becomes a clichéd symbol of paradise. In reality, as Mulder points out, there is no one single symbolic value assigned to water, and these include its role in "Muslim legal, scientific, geographical treatises...travel writing, and poetry."[31] It is ripe for metaphor "for the beauty of the human body, the emotion of love, and of life and its destruction."[32] Water as a symbol must not be reserved only for the Quranic paradise metaphor, and water as a commodity must not be especially considered

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[29] Emma Clark. *Underneath Which Rivers Flow: The Symbolism of the Islamic Garden*. London: Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture, 1996. P. 10.
[30] Stephennie Mulder. "Review: Blair & Bloom, Rivers of Paradise." Academia.edu. 2011. https://www.academia.edu/1505555/Review_Blair_and_Bloom_Rivers_of_Paradise. p. 647.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

within the context of the Islamic lands versus its role in forming all societies; all settlements.

Not only are these approaches singular and exoticizing, they are also incorrect. Looking specifically at the place of origin for the Keir Collection images, Qazvin, even in the time contemporaneous of the folios' creation, was far from a barren wasteland. The city of Qazvin guards the trade routes to the Caspian Sea and beyond. The temperature was and is moderate, with averages in 34.5 C (94.1 F) in the summer and -5.4 C (22 F) in the winters.[33] There is frequent snowfall, although annual rainfall sits at almost 13.5 inches, rather on the low side.[34] While Qazvin is not the Sahara, the city did experience some water shortages according to most sources from the time. Nevertheless, there was enough water for drinking, provided from rainfall and mountain run-off, as the city was irrigated by a *qanat* system. Hamdallah Mustawfi, an Ilkhanid geographer and poet (buried in Qazvin), "states that the town was surrounded by extensive gardens, orchards, and vineyards...melons and watermelons were cultivated after the land had been flooded once and fruited well without another watering. Much grain was also grown. Good pastures existed in the neighborhood."[35] Clearly, the landscape was green and flowering. Qazvin was not a desolate land, where the people sat about in a heat-induced daze and dreamed of an afterlife where they may one day see water, trees, and thriving gardens. For the people of Qazvin, these ideas were already an achievable reality and they had no need to dream of them.

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[33] Clifford Edmund Bosworth. *Historic Cities of the Islamic World*. Leiden: Brill, 2008. P. 444.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid, p. 446.

While Qazvin was not a desert, it was also no perfect oasis. As noted above, the city relied on a *qanat* system of irrigation. The *qanat* system is an underground aqueduct, and consists of a tunnel that slopes downwards. At its highest point, the system collects rainwater and other water runoff, which it then disperses along its irrigation canals and various outlets [figure 5].[36] Although this type of irrigation and water supply was certainly prolific in Iran, the water supply of a *qanat* system is difficult to regulate or control. The system relied on elevation, with gravity pulling water downhill. In Qazvin, those with more money lived uphill, while the poorer and more undesirable areas were placed low in the cityscape. For Qazvin, this relationship between elevation and income meant that the central city of Qazvin rarely received surplus water in summer, as the estates situated upstream used the majority of the water.[37] In the heat of the summer, lower income citizens were not guaranteed more than drinking water. While the overall landscape of Qazvin was green, it was a landscape provided for and by the elites of the city who could afford to use water to garden or cultivate pools. Things were not so dire as the determinist literature of the 1970s would have us believe, but it was certainly clear that water was flowing from the seats of power within Safavid society, and that the abundant gardens of Qazvin were deeply steeped in class sensibilities.

SAFAVID GARDENS

The gardens of Safavid Iran were indeed intended to communicate, but not in the way they may have been painted by American and European scholars. While it's almost

[36] P. Beaumont B.A., Ph.D. (1971) Qanat Systems in Iran, Hydrological Sciences Journal, 16:1, 39-50, DOI: 10.1080/02626667109493031. P. 39.
[37] Ibid.

certain that no landscape designer or horticulturist was intent on *avoiding* references to a place of paradisiacal pleasure, it cannot be assumed to be a garden's only goal. It simply is not the only, or the most natural, interpretation of the evidence. Flora (both physical and depicted in art and other media) has been somewhat neglected both aesthetically and in relation to their practical function. More than being a reference to the afterlife, Safavid royal gardens function to reflect class sensibilities and social control. They reflect a political order, a space of beauty, but with social purpose. Scholars may indeed look at gardens as a space that communicates, but the flora functions more in a political and social way than any religious metaphor that circles around a desert dwellers' scarcity mindset.

Inside their walls, gardens were frequently dotted with water features and pavilions. There were sometimes zoos or collections of animals, and certainly collections of rare or foreign plants. Courtyards would often house the ruler's harem and religious buildings. These were sites of royal access, or invite-only affairs where the Shah would keep his most precious things and the spaces were largely reserved for his own retreats--a chance to escape a noisy or crowded palace complex, and sit amongst color and relaxing sound for a respite. Gardens and courtyards were and are always underwritten by financial investments, and as access to them was limited they have also always been political spaces. Gardens are indeed deliberately delightful, and referential of the ideal. However, they are also part of a larger cultural program aimed at creating and on the social fabric of Safavid cities such as Qazvin and Isfahan.

Gardens were curated spaces designed by Shahs in order to express themselves both to their public and to visiting officials. They are a mark not only on the private sector, but a considerable punctuation of the urban environment. Contrary to the four-iwan plan of Safavid houses (wherein rooms are built around a central, outdoor courtyard and the occupants migrate from room to room according to seasonal heating patterns), gardens are a space where this temporality of living is reversed.[38] With typical royal garden design, two streams quarter a rectangular walled garden with a pavilion at the center. In this reversal of the four-iwan plan that reflects the "supremacy of time in human life", the garden challenges the power of time and decay.[39] While the four-iwan plan home keeps residents constantly rotating through rooms depending on season, the garden presents an alternative with open spaces that put man at the center of the world, instead of the periphery. In even the most arbitrary of design choices, these were spaces created to forefront the power of their patron--over land, over pleasure, over space, and even, perhaps, over time itself, hoping to create a legacy that would last long beyond the patron's earthly life.

While we have already considered what Safavid royal gardens are not, we must take a closer look at what they actually were. Within garden spaces, there were three types of pavilions that often made an appearance: the building, the kiosk, and the tent.[40] There was always a relationship between the pavilion and the garden which was a

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[38] Saied Khaghani, "The Notion of Time and the Image of Place", *Islamic Art, Architecture and Material Culture: New Perspectives*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Mohammad Gharipour. *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2013.

reiteration of the nature of the spaces themselves--an intersection of the natural, built, and social worlds; the planted and built areas in harmony but also in juxtaposition. In a celebration of the seasons, the garden frequently boasted Judas trees, jasmine, mallows, apple and almond trees, complemented by colorful violets, jonquil, and hyacinth.[41] The garden added color to the environment; blues, purples and yellows that rarely occur in nature unless cultivated. Color and hue were part of the holistic semiotic experience. A mental playground for poets and intellectuals alike, the garden boasted many practical purposes as well. Events were hosted in royal gardens, planned around seasonal blooming.[42] Within Safavid gardens, there were almost always water features, which added an additional element of sound.[43] Although Qazvin was not devoid of green spaces, gardens were exceedingly lush and green environments that were cultivated specifically to rebuke the march of time that inevitably wilts all. In Iran, gardens were spaces where dance entertainment, musical entertainment, polo matches, archery competitions, religious ceremonies, celebratory meals, social visits with royal audiences or diplomatic visits, and even hunting took place.[44] Suitable for any number of royal occupations, Safavids cultivated their gardens to be a space that worked for their political needs.

Gardens themselves were signs of wealth and power. While gardens were indeed a place of repose and relaxation, they served a practical function and possessed very real

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[41] MacDougall & Ettinghausen, p. 47.
[42] Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair. *And Diverse Are Their Hues: Color in Islamic Art and Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011. P. 313.
[43] Wickham, p. 51.
[44] Barbara L. Stark. "Urban Gardens and Parks in Pre-modern States and Empires." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 24, no. 01 (2014): 87-115. doi:10.1017/s0959774314000079. P. 91.

economic value. Although under-investigated for their role in society, in reality, gardens themselves have always been major facets of Safavid culture.[45] In fact, gardens in many cases were agricultural spaces and sources of income. Even in the case of Shah Tahmasp's royal garden, Sa'adatabad in Qazvin, court poet Abdi Bayk Shirazi (d. 1515-1580) wrote that the garden was intended to provide agricultural products, such as fruits.[46] Although these fruits were only consumed by members of the Safavid royal family (or given as diplomatic gifts), the practical output of these spaces add another layer of economic value to the garden. Not only did the gardens in Qazvin require wealth to create and maintain, they were also spaces that were functioning within the economic system of the Safavids.

The garden was also the place the Shah was said to rest between battles, gathering his mind and planning for war. However, it was not only a place for physical restoration. Referring again to the records of Abdi Shirazi, describing the royal garden of Qazvin, he states that "the pavilion (*qasr*) was supposed to be used not only as a residence for Shah Tahmasp and his family, but also as the main location for his administrative affairs."[47] A commonality between both gardens and paintings of gardens seems to be the multiplicity of their design—pleasure, but not without practical function. Gardens were where wars were planned and made. They were where the Shah made his political decisions, as well as invited honored guests to partake in his private space of rest. The garden was a space

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[45] Mohammad Gharipour. "Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure: Multifunctionality of Gardens in Medieval Persia". *Garden History* 39, no. 2 (2011): 249-62. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41411812. P. 249.
[46] Ibid, p. 252.
[47] Ibid, p. 254.

that was significant enough that the fruits of it were offered to diplomats in order to make peace, or demonstrate success. The garden was the site for administrative affairs, the harem, and more. It was where the Shah crafted the best representation of his role as the latest in the lineage of the Prophet, working together with nature—by right of his sainthood at birth.

SHAH TAHMASP AND THE GARDEN IN QAZVIN

Shah Tahmasp, himself, was an avid proponent of gardens as communicative devices. Shaping the landscape shapes the way people live. The ability to shape the day-to-day lives of any population is a demonstration of control, a reminder to everyone who walks over a cultivated stream or on the outside of a garden wall that someone is in charge, and that presence may not be lightly forgotten. Ismail, Tahmasp's father, was also a noted enthusiast of time spent outdoors. This partly due to his love of hunting, he was said to spend more time outdoors and camping than within permanent, constructed spaces.[48]

Although young Tahmasp was being trained by the artist Bihzad away from his father, both Ismail and Tahmasp's workshops displayed preferences towards paintings centered around the natural world of men, animals, and verdant vegetation.[49] Young Tahmasp, again like his father, also dedicated himself to outdoor pursuits. He preferred fishing to hunting, however, reflecting his more idling personality, a quality that would not go unnoticed by visiting European guests who marveled at the way the Persians spend

[48] Sheila R. Canby. *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000. Pg. 24.
[49] Ibid, p. 31.

the hours sitting within their gardens and outdoor pavilions, contrary to the spirit of motion and exploration presumably prompted by English and French gardens.[50] Within Safavid gardens, there was certainly a spirit of repose, ease, and luxury. Outside of this royal garden, however, the view was only of a barrier—both physical, and socioeconomic. Owning and creating such a signature on the land required wealth, power, and access to an education about horticulture and design knowledge (as Shahs were fundamentally involved in the design process, even, in some cases, planting rows themselves). The ability to own or invite someone into any space so private, much less one so lush and colorful, was of course in itself a political behavior.

As previously mentioned, Tahmasp spent most of his childhood in Herat studying under the famed artist, Bihzad. Tahmasp himself was thus a painter and trained artist, his taste precise and his eye informed. As such, he was well aware of the communicative properties paintings hold, and understood how to utilize artistic detail to send political and spiritual messages. One of Bihzad's earliest surviving works is a pair of illustrations for a manuscript of Saadi's *Gulistan*. In one of these paintings, titled *Saadi and the Youth of Kashgar* [figure 6], Bihzad depicts the poet Saadi in a garden courtyard. To the left of the scene a sycamore stands with autumnal leaves while a young and older man stand in conversation below. In front of the seated Saadi, with his long white beard, a vase full of white flowers seems to be conducted by his teachings. These symbols are ones we will return to later on.

[50] Gharipour, p. 142.

In addition to the influence of master Bihzad, the visual culture of Herat very much influenced young Tahmasp's artistic tastes, with architectural construction from the last Timurid emperor having a significant impact on the young Tahmasp.[51] At Tahmasp's early palace in Tabriz (inherited from his father), the complex was situated within a garden. Even before Tahmasp and his atelier made the move to Qazvin, Tahmasp is filtering his understanding of the visual cityscape through his own treasured experiences within great garden complexes.

Part of the impetus for Tahmasp's move to Qazvin was the desire for a space that, aesthetically, was all his own. The Treaty of Amasya was already struck, and although it made some sense to move the capital away from the ever-present possibility of a resurgent Ottoman threat, the move of the capital was a lot of work for a situation that already seemed settled. It is likely that the move was also influenced by Qazvin's potential to host public works projects and a new residence complex for Tahmasp, designed by Tahmasp.[52] These plans were rooted in "Safavid politics of splendor", a visual program designed to astonish and confound in a show of wealth.[53] Each building and garden plan held "the kinetic vision of a space [which] presented a *tableau vivant* of authority and legitimacy," a reflection of the patron who designed them.[54]

Before the royal move, a meticulous and careful plan was laid out for the new Qazvin. One of Tahmasp's first projects in this new capital was the creation of the

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[51] Canby, p. 45.
[52] Ibid, p. 68.
[53] Sussan Babaie and Talinn Grigor. *Persian Kingship and Architecture Strategies of Power in Iran from the Achaemenids to the Pahlavis*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2015. P. 225.
[54] Ibid.

Sa'adatabad Gardens. This space, irrigated again by the *qanat* system drawing water from the nearby mountains, was a large walled garden divided into four parts by two large avenues.[55] Tahmasp's court poet (the previously mentioned Abdi Shirazi) created a poetic collection called 'The Garden of Eden' (*Jannat-i 'Adan*) which contained five poems, four of which are about the glorious Sa'adatabad Garden", with the final poem largely focused on the paintings in the garden's pavilions. Shirazi's piece begins with praise for his patron, and he then takes the reader on a poetic walk through the garden, beginning in a tree-lined avenue:

"With that avenue like the Milky Way,
the king showed men the right path.
When a path like this has been reached,
anyone in it will walk the straight and narrow."[56]

Shirazi notes a path that coaxes visitors into the main garden area, lined with tall trees. He takes pains to connect the garden design to more metaphysical ideas, such as the Shah's (especially in the Safavid Shi'a context) role as a religious leader. The Shah's new garden was not only filled with stately, beautiful trees, but with the potent reminder of a path to righteousness that only Shah may point one towards. To heed the Shah is to find the path to righteousness—conveniently located within his garden.

[55] Ibid, p. 53.
[56] Paul Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time: Descriptive Patterns in 'Abdi Bey Shirazi's Garden of Eden." Academia.edu. 2003.

SAFAVID PAINTING

While an exploration of the imagery in each Keir Collection painting will follow, first and foremost, the images are paintings. Safavid paintings were designed to be held closely, and 'read' by a private audience of one or two. The process rewarded close looking, with the painted pages held in one's hands and close to the eye as each miniature detail revealed itself. Although during this period the painting was slowly becoming a commercial commodity, this did not mean the accessibility of them as objects experienced a shift. Paintings were still quite a luxury; employing a painter or group of artists was not an inexpensive undertaking. Paintings were a luxury good, and were communicative items, not only due to the scene or story depicted in them, but also in the very possession of them as objects. Paintings demonstrated an education about the stories they held, connections into the upper crust of society, and not least of all, literacy. Just as creating Safavid paintings was an incredible skill, so was reading and enjoying one. It was a pastime of the wealthy to recline in leisure and gaze upon these expensive objects, rich in color and metaphor, and engage with the material presented. To pass the time in a garden, looking at a beautiful painting, is perhaps to literally lie in a bed of roses. These paintings, like gardens themselves, were for pleasure, but they also sent a political and economic message about the person that owned them and the kind of lifestyle they were able to possess.

Moving into the world of art, gardens are not an uncommon feature of Safavid paintings. In fact, the exaltation of the outdoors is a vibrant green thread throughout Safavid visual culture. In the earlier *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp, the emphasis was

largely on royal gardens and heroism. The images from this manuscript are frequently referred to as hallmarks of Safavid style, premier in quality and design. Miniature painting emerged with royal patronage, and in the 1520s during the creation of Tahmasp's *Shahnama*, the royal atelier in Tabriz was hard at work creating images to accompany Firdowsi's poetic text on the history of Iran.[57] In *The Shah's Wise Men Approve of Zal's Marriage* [figure 7], a similar pavilion as in the Qazvin folios appears. In this *Shahnama* painting, a shah sits on a throne wrapped in gold and fabric. The design of the scene seems to reference elements present in both the court and garden scenes of the later Qazvin paintings: a royal on a throne, backed by a wall painting of grisaille creatures amongst loose flora, all contorting as if caught in the same breeze that blows nearby cypress trees. The tile floor spills from the pavilion down into a cultivated pool of water, complete with a golden fountain topped by a sculpted nightingale, the poetic partner of the rose. Through the courtyard gate, curious men in their Safavid *taj* hide in the garden. This is presented as heavily stratified space, wherein the Shah sits with a sense of enclosure, blocked by the gate and architecture. Fences serve as borders for social hierarchies, marking what is 'in' and what is 'out' of these political circles. Several 'non-essential' men converse excitedly behind the tall, slender trees of the garden. The trees form a barrier, similar to the fence--it blocks these men from being truly a part of the action, or the unfolding drama. The tips of the cypresses bow to meet the blooms of a nearby plum or cherry tree, enclosing the whispering men, who occupy a world apart.

[57] Gharipour, p. 145.

In an image dated to the later 16th century [figure 8], Shah Tahmasp is shown in the garden with several courtiers. A shah is again seated on his throne at the focal point of the painting. He and his courtiers drink wine, and eat ripe pomegranate fruits. The mountain behind the shah grows tallest behind his *taj*, as if his head were the force raising it. Tahmasp's throne is part built, and part grown, as he is saluted and supported by the two cypress trees on his sides. Woven between the cypresses, two almond trees erupt with blooms varying in saturation. Below the throne is another cultivated pool. This pool, much like in the Qazvin scene, features two paired ducks. They, like the plants around them, seem to be in the throes of spring. As the seated Tahmasp takes a cup of wine from a servant, he looks towards the courtiers who kneel towards the left of the scene offering him vibrant fruits. As his head turns, so too do the trees around him. If it was not already clear by his large size and central position, Shah Tahmasp is a figure to be reckoned with. He controls not only his attending courtiers, but the very earth also mimics his moods.

Chapter 3: The Qazvin Court Painting

Painted gardens are a demonstrative, political space, and as such what is happening within the Qazvin folios must be closely examined. The paintings function both on their own, and as one unit together, spilling from one page onto the next. These two paintings are part of a private collection, and thus, very little information about their provenance is known. The two pages are almost 21 inches tall (20 ⅞ inches) and about 15 and a half inches wide (15 ⅜ inches). It's unclear whether they were removed from a larger manuscript or unfinished book.

Firstly, another piece of context relating to the paintings should be explored, also tied into the way Persians viewed and expressed themselves. The calligraphy bordering each of the Keir paintings is damaged and difficult to read. However, the text appears to be excerpts from the poet Nizami's *Khamsa*.[58] The *Khamsa* itself is made up of five poems, and "all five poems deal with the theme of human perfectibility...expressed directly or by means of stories of love which show that personal virtue and wisdom are necessary prerequisites for just rule."[59] Nizami presents the concept of the Perfect Man in his poetry, someone who serves as the intermediary between God and the world, and who unites the spiritual and physical world. Shah Tahmasp was certainly invested in projecting a similar image as a guardian of faith, with a Venetian reporter in 1571 noting that "Tahmasp's subjects viewed him 'not as a king, but as a god, on account of his

[58] Translation courtesy of Dr. Koorosh Angali, Tehran Art University.
[59] Niẓāmī Ganjavī and Julie Scott Meisami. *The Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2015. Pg. xi.

descent from the line of Ali.'"[60] This idea is quite Sufi, as well--'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, founder of the Qadiriyya Sufi order, was one of the first to present the prophet Muhammad as the Perfect Man.[61] This world of Nizami, with Perfect Men and rulers naturally bestowed with watertight ethics, was a place the Safavids were interested in occupying. Shah Tahmasp and other Safavid monarchs positioned themselves as spiritual leaders with the absolute right to rule.

Peculiarly enough, tales from the *Khamsa* are not the only literary sources referenced between these two pieces. While the surrounding text is most likely post-dated, and comes from two separate versions of a classic Iranian tale, there is another band of text present in the court scene that was surely more intrinsic to the painting's creation [figure 8]. Above the shah's throne is a band of inscription in thrilling red, blue, yellow, and green. The central green medallion holds the artist's name (Amal-i Bahram Quli, or roughly, the work of Bahram Quli). The two oblong navy cartouches contain quotes from the poet Saadi's *Bustan*, a work of poetry comprising about 14,000 couplets.[62] Completed around 1257 CE, the *Bustan* or *Fragrant Herb Garden* is divided into 10 chapters: on justice, on benevolence, on love, on humility, on resignation, on contentment, on education, on gratitude, on repentance, and on prayer.[63] The *Bustan* is a guide to each of these accomplishments in emotion. It is from this text, in Chapter Four (on humility) that the inscription that decorates the back of the shah's throne originates.

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Ganjavī & Meisami, pg. xi.
[62] G. Michael Wickens. "Bustan." Encyclopædia Iranica. December 15, 1990. Accessed March 30, 2019. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bustan-sadi.
[63] Ibid.

Translated for meaning, the text wishes the partygoers well. In essence, it reads, "I hope you have a great life, and that God protects you."[64] It wishes prosperity and a great life to the guests of the party, as well as the shah himself who inscribed it into his own courtyard pavilion.

In the Keir Collection paintings, the courtly scene on the right presents a lively and crowded scene of a feast in progress. The viewer seems to be guided into the scene by a young courtier in red, looking up towards the shah and offering a covered plate of food [figure 9]. He passes a row of slip-on shoes, most likely cloth and black leather [figure 10]. Bahram Quli, the painter (or an apprentice), took great pains to present the paired and discarded shoes on the side of the scene as a symbol of status--to have a servant whose job it is to remove the shoes of your guests is a luxury, as a worthy host would never touch something as dirty as a shoe. Clearly, the guests are both well-taken care of and must feel quite at home, barefoot although in the presence of a royal. The atmosphere is relaxed, and all courtiers and guests seem comfortable, if not somewhat raucous.

The tips of the discarded shoes gesture towards a grouping of seated guests who are clustered in the bottom of the scene [figure 11]. Perhaps the most notable of these figures is a plump gentleman in a rich blue overcoat. His shoes are removed, an indicator of his status, especially when compared to the servant across from him whose blue boots are, quite obviously, still on his feet. An artist took careful pains to lift the robe of the seated gentlemen in blue in order to allow a view of his stocking feet. Combined with his

[64] Translation assistance by Nader Sayedi, PhD Candidate, University of Texas at Austin.

generous size and the comparably tan color of his skin perhaps from travel, this man is likely a wealthy courtier. He gazes intimately into the eyes of a nearby youth, who is beardless and fair. As he passes a cup of libation to the youth, the older gentleman places his hand on his shoulder and leans in close, encouraging the younger to drink and partake in the merrymaking. In a scene that invokes romance, the youth perhaps unconsciously touches his belt. Although the pages are damaged, the remains of a smile is visible on the youth's face. Shards of blue lie at their feet, potentially the remnants of a serving vessel shattered by inattention as the youth became more and more absorbed into the older man's arms.

In front of this distracted pair, a gold decanter of wine sits between two platters of pears, all situated on a vibrant red textile. The satisfied courtier's shape is mimicked by the succulent pears and rotund wine vessel, all suggesting the same air of ripeness. Holding another long-necked wine vessel, a servant (still in his shoes) kneels and presents a cup of wine to another guest in red. This guest clutches his turban as he accepts the cup of wine, having perhaps a few too many glasses already during the celebration. This scene is an interesting microcosm of the feast at large, with scenes of romance, debauchery, implications of class and society roles, and a tangled web of physical touch that causes the image to pulsate, or come alive.

Continuing across the lowest register of the scene to the left, two unidentified fowl roast on a spit for the consumption of the Shah and his guests [figure 12]. Bright yellow flames lash out from the pile of wood and onto the fowl, burning lively and hot. Another kneeling servant is tasked with the rotation of the fowl, and additional firewood

is cast about his feet implying that the party is expected to continue well into the evening. Although it is unclear if he is actually being prodded by the nearby musician, the implication of interconnectedness is implied by the outstretched fingers of the musician, reaching almost as if to feed the servant whose hands are occupied with preparing the feast. Behind this servant's crouched body, a black hookah base stands. It is unoccupied at the moment, but available, and certainly inviting. To the very left of the lowest register, another plump guest appears to have just entered the scene [figure 13]. He turns his head as if to watch the musicians in the center of the pavilion, and gestures towards them emphatically.

Following his gaze upwards, in the crook of his arm, another pair of shoes rests on the green-tiled floor. Above this guest's head, a servant in lapis blue pants is caught in the act of removing a courtier's shoes, with one hand on the black slippers and one hand twirling a piece of fabric that seems to be connected to his waist. Perhaps unprepared as of yet for his shoes to be removed, the courtier who stands in a pale yellow overcoat grabs the strap of the servant's backpack tightly, as if apprehending him. With his other hand, the courtier gestures to his half-removed shoes, as if to question the behavior or perhaps prohibit it [figure 14]. We may imagine the servant, although his face is largely diminished due to wear, has the remains of a gasp on his puckered lips.

Perhaps one reason the shoes and the act of their removal is made so prominent is in yet another reference to Saadi within this painting. Saadi's texts became and remain popular in Europe and the United States as well as the Islamic lands of pre-modern times. One of the most famous quotes from the *Bustan*, as often cited in English, is "I cried

because I had no shoes till I met a man who had no feet." This quote, another lesson on humility and gratefulness, reminds the reader via one of Saadi's personal anecdotes to count their blessings. It may be that the notable presence of shoes within the courtyard scene serves as a reiteration of the presence of the Saadi quotes behind the throne--both tapping into the famous and venerable legacy of the master Persian poet. While the inscriptions over the door cast out a blessing from heaven upon all who sit and read it, the potential allusion to another popular Saadi quote reminds all who receive such blessings as the throne offers to be grateful for what they are given.

Sweeping back across the painting, moving to the right of the servant caught in his act of collecting shoes, a pair of musicians performs [figure 15]. One is in a blue brocade overcoat, kneeling, clutching a stretch of cloth that dangles from his waistband much in the same way as the servant behind him. In his hand he holds a Persian tambourine, or *dayera.* It is a circular frame with animal skin stretched taut across it, metal disks attached and dangling from its exterior edges. The history of the instrument can be traced back into ancient Persian history (7th-8th century BCE) but was represented most frequently in art during the Timurid and Safavid periods.[65] The *dayera* pictured here in this courtly scene is the most common in painting: the *dayera zangi*, which featured five metal disks around the exterior edges. As in this scene, the *dayera zangi* is usually pictured alongside the *ney*, a reed flute that is Turkish in origin. In

[65] Veronica Doubleday. "Daf and Dayera." Encyclopædia Iranica. December 15, 1993.

addition to being painted together, the two often appear as a pair in poetry and are used specifically in Sufi musical practices.[66]

And indeed, as featured in the Qazvin court scene, a musician in red kneels and plays the *rey*. Although the two men seem to have caught the attention of several nearby guests, they exist in a bubble of their own. They seem to play directly to a tray of fruits and pomegranates placed in front of them. They are an intrinsic part of the revelry at large, clearly valuable as marked by the cup and golden decanter of wine placed in front of them, inviting them to partake as valuable guests. While the pair do seem somewhat neglected in the hubbub of the scene, they are precisely in the sight line of the throne, with the musician in blue casting his gaze upwards perhaps to see if their patron is enjoying the musical selection.

In the top center of the floor, and posed in juxtaposition with the roasting fowl, are two more golden decanters of wine on either side of another black hookah base. All three sit together in a gold serving vessel, part and parcel of the requirements for the ruler's festivities [figure 16]. In the center of the green mosaicked courtyard, another young servant sits on his knees in a blue *pirahan* and pours wine from a decanter into a small golden cup. Below him sits a covered tray, capped with a black domed lid to keep food hot and away from flies [figure 17]. This may be a young man, as he is smaller in stature than the nearby musician. However, the difference in his size may also be explained by his status: unlike the musicians whose bodies loom much larger than his, he, as a servant, is comparatively insignificant to the party. Especially compared to the

[66] Ibid.

whirling mass of bodies on either side of this young servant, he, in the painting's central column, is a brief respite for the eyes. Although he is in action (pouring wine into a cup, most likely for one of the Shah's visiting guests), he is the only figure in the lower courtyard who does not visibly interact with another.

Diagonally from him, moving back into the upper right of the pavilion floor, another pair of guests sit in front of a red textile laden with food [figure 18]. The textile is wrinkled and folded, with the blue of its underside revealed. It is a testament to the action of the party, and like the removed shoes, a gesture of the relaxed and comfortable mood the guests enjoy. Another decanter of wine is situated on the blanket (wine is clearly in ample supply), as does a tray of pears and pomegranates. The young man in tomato red twists to offer the larger gentleman, wearing brown and green, a sampling of the refreshment he holds in his lap. The food on the tray is obscured from damage, but could perhaps be pistachios. The older gentleman, his stomach bowed out over the buckles of his belt, eats greedily from the younger man's lap. One hand extends towards the serving tray, while his other hand is occupied funneling food into his open mouth. His green jacket is cast off his left-hand shoulder and onto the floor, decorum secondary to his enjoyment.

Returning at last to the first figure we examined, the young boy in red who brings a covered tray to the guests, the last interaction on the pavilion floor is revealed. The servant's knees bent in his hurry, he rushes to the call of a seated courtier in gold at the very top right of the courtyard [figure 19]. This man places one hand on his knee, while

his other hand reaches towards the servant carrying food and beckons to him, indicating that he's interested in whatever treat the young boy may be carrying.

Moving upwards at last to the upper platform where the shah sits, the space is divided into a central zone (which holds the throne) and the surrounding architecture on either side. At the edge of the throne platform is another swath of textile, this time of red brocade with a rich gold reverse [figure 20]. It too has been tread upon and appears wrinkled, another casualty of the boisterous party. On top of it sits another large serving tray. Although the contents of the tray are largely lost to time, it appears to be loaded to the brim with more nuts, a sugar cone, and some sort of black and gold vessel in a style exclusive to the throne area.

Above this textile sits the shah on his golden throne, legs crossed before him, wrapped in a jade green *pirahan* that matches the tile of the courtyard below, as if to signify that he and the garden complex are connected [figure 21]. Head topped with a gold and brown crown, his head tilts slightly downward to acknowledge a servant who meekly offers up a tray of fruits resembling figs. In a similar fashion to the man below him, greedily eating nuts, the shah's outer coat hangs loosely over one of his shoulders as his arm reaches towards the proffered fruit bowl. The shah's other hand delicately holds a cup of wine. The back piece of his throne reflects not only the hues his party guests wear, but also the winding floral motif on the wall behind him. A white feather on the shah's turban mimics the movements of his body, swooping down towards the humbled servant.

The servant in his pale yellow garb offers fruit in the most sincere of poses [figure 22]. He crouches, almost prostrate before the shah, apparently eager to please. Both the

servant and the feather bend before the shah, following his gaze. Two other attendants, larger in size than the boy offering fruit, are standing close behind on the raised stage [figure 23]. In red and brown overcoats, they turn and look at one another rather than the shah or the ongoing feast below them. The attendant in the brown jacket struggles while juggling two wine decanters, and his body seems off-kilter; his back is bowed, as if he may be close to dropping his delivery. The neighboring boy, in red, peers towards the uncertain situation above him placing one foot markedly in front of the other, creating a wide stance--perhaps he intends to assist his friend.

The remaining human figures in the scene lean in from the windows of the adjacent architecture. The garden pavilion here functions almost as a dollhouse, the building peeled back to afford a more spacious view of the rich, bustling interior. The building's walls itself also appear thin and paper-like, curtailed to afford a view of the treetops behind the festivity. In its sides, two windows are shown on the left and the right. Beginning with the right-hand lower window, a man emerges from the interior of the building, and he occupies most of the casement [figure 24]. His knees are bent in movement. He turns back towards the opening he emerges from, and a second hand appears behind a blue drape. The man in the foreground twists and beckons to the hidden figure, using three fingers. In his other hand, the man holds a slim brown rod--possibly another *rey*, or flute. The pair may be additional musicians, running late for their performance and hustling to join their partners. In the lower left door to the courtyard, an older man in blue with a red sash leans wistfully upon his brown cane. His lips puckered in admiration, he watches the festivities from behind a cream-colored curtain.

The doors of this building are capped with a similar design as to that which decorates the shah's throne: verdant vines in rich jewel tones. The side wall is ornamented in a band of maroon and white, while the majority of the walls themselves may be made of red sandstone. A building material that was popular in Mughal India, sandstone is water resistant but soft and easy to work with. Agra Fort, for example, was built roughly contemporaneously to these Qazvin paintings, so the artists would almost certainly have been aware not only of the material but also its status in affirming a certain air of worldliness.

At the top right window, two figures are featured, including a woman--the first we have yet seen in the gathering [figure 25]. Truncated in a similar fashion to the arm below them, only excerpts of their bodies are visible. With such an abridged view, it is possible that the second and smaller figure (dressed in red) is a young child, as their headgear does not seem to match the other women pictured in the higher windows, nor the male courtiers or servants in the courtyard below. With their arm dangling out of the open window, they turn to face the woman in blue, almost as if caught, like all children have once been, pushing the boundaries. Or, perhaps, the young figure beckons the older woman to the window and gestures from that viewpoint towards the festivities below, in awe much like any child would be. Moving over to the left-hand side of this structure, another elite Safavid woman observes the festivities from above [figure 26]. Her hands are both placed on the outside of the window frame, clearly enthralled by the party. Her neck is craned towards the feast, taking in all the exciting details. She wears a gold tiara over the top of her starched veil, much like the woman in the right-hand window.

Complimenting the gold of her headgear, her neck is adorned with a gold pendant and pearls. High up and hidden within the windows, the women are unveiled and easy, able to take in the party from their exclusive vantage points.

The largest and most central piece of the garden architecture is the sizeable wall painting behind the throne [figure 27]. Framed by the same winding floral vines that encase the shah in his royal seat, the lowest register of this foliate vine pattern eventually gives way to cream and blue buds whose tripartite design suggests the imminence of a bloom. Above the wall painting, the gold vine pattern continues, this time with blue lotuses in full bloom as they reach towards the upper inscription. This large black and white painting, while visually arresting, is not an unusual artistic convention for the time. In one synchronal example illustrating a scene from the *Khamsa*, a similar mural is depicted [figure 28]. Over the marriage bed of hero Khusraw and his bride Shirin, a wall painting of the same shape is seen. It features the same tender, leaning branches and delicate symmetrical leaves as in the Qazvin folio, with a similar color palette. It also exists between a view into a prosperous garden outside, and an inset double-framed painting above. While the scene here is (slightly) less crowded, it is still one of a feast, and attendants bring covered trays of food to the lovers while vessels of wine wait below them, musicians playing nearby. These large, bichrome paintings are often present in Safavid scenes of elite courtly life as they were frequently features of elite homes and spaces.

Returning to the Qazvin paintings, at the top of the wall painting above the door is a framed dark gray and white painting, a focal point for the scene by measure of its

darkness and thick, intricate detail [figure 29]. Upon close inspection, the undulating white lines within form not only an extremely verdant and bountiful floral scene, but also feature a pair of mated ducks. In the center of this red-framed square, two ducks face each other, their necks raised towards each other and also upwards, towards a blooming vine. Rendered almost as serpents, each layer of feathers is articulated in a curved line that animates the birds, and echoes the water ripples of their natural environment.

This key piece of the wall painting, a pair of ducks (potentially mated), is not an uncommon motif for Safavid visual culture of the time. The motif resonates within Sufi ideology, a representation of the connection between the divine and earthly souls.[67] Ducks are at the intersection of both the earth, the water, and the air--able to traverse all of these and equally at home within them. They were additionally able to dive below the surface of the water, rather than merely float upon its surface. This was often taken as a metaphor for the Underworld or afterlife, and thus paired ducks as a symbol remain potent for their ability to exist on both the spiritual and material level.[68]

In this scene, the ducks seem to divide attention from the throne, being indeed in the central position and in a much darker hue than any surrounding material. This alone may communicate their significance to the scene, although there are other theories surrounding their elevated presence within Safavid art. One theory circles around a common Persian word for ducks, *bat* or *bot*. The second word, *bot*, was also used by Sufi

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[67] Andrew Butler Wheelhouse. "Decoded: 17 Things You Can Read in This Safavid Court Painting | Christie's." April 21, 2016. https://www.christies.com/features/Decoded-reading-a-Safavid-court-painting-7187-1.aspx.

[68] Schuyler V. R. Cammann. "Religious Symbolism in Persian Art." *History of Religions* 15, no. 3 (1976): 193-208. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1062524. P. 204.

mystics in reference to God, so the presence of ducks in a royal scene (such as in this example from Qazvin) may intend to subtly reference the presence of God adjacent to a ruler. In any case, the prominence of the paired ducks in this scene are an almost certain elaboration of the Sufi themes that permeate the entire folio.

The black and white wall painting is the largest visual feature of the backing architecture, and is a complex and bewildering scene. In faint black lines many strange and exciting animal shapes appear, almost hidden betwixt the exaggerated branches and idyllic leaves. Beginning to the left-hand of the two paired ducks, a powerful hind leg reaches towards the boundaries of the frame. Articulated toes emerge from this stout leg, and press into the green and gold. The curve of the animal's leg echoes the undulations of its tail, and the two are divided by a slender and winding branch, accented by olive green leaves. The same slender branches mimic the meandering forms of the creature's back, wrapping around the front of his head as if to signify the end of the animal. Likely a great lion, the front right paw sinks into a clod of dirt that a tree emerges from [figure 30]. It appears as if the lion has its mouth around the base of the tree; as if pouncing on it, subjugating it. Although the branches already conform to its body, the lion, claws extended, demonstrates its fierceness and control.

Below the lion, through sporadic leaves and captured in a circle of branches, another creature roams the painting. This may be a boar, marked by its dark hooves, bristled hair and tail, and the semblance of small, curved tusks extending from the snout [figure 31]. While this may seem an unlikely choice for a mural of such status, the Iranian

boar was a massive creature, often exceeding 550 pounds in weight.[69] Its size and its fierce tusks make it a fearsome predator. In addition to being intimidating to an average human, the boar also served a purpose in the natural world. Due to its feeding habits, the boar is often cited as a savior of the forest. As it digs, it exposes harmful insect grubs to predators, and aerates the leaf-littered forest floor, allowing space for more and new growth.[70] Lastly, pork is prohibited from consumption by most iterations of the Muslim community. Due to this restriction (and its impressive size) the wild boar was rarely killed in Iran. As such, it joins the pouncing lion on the throne-wall mural as another symbol of control over the natural world, as well as a display of power the seated shah would certainly want to associate himself with

In the central column of the piece, between the door leading outside and the depiction of the paired ducks, a small dragon perches in the foliage [figure 32]. Two horns, or tufts of fur, wind out from the top of the animal's head. It has a slim body and slender tail, and is crouched as if resting. In an image [figure 33] from the famed *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp, dated a few decades before these Qazvin scenes, Prince Isfandiyar faces a fierce trial. Seated in a chariot equipped with lances, the prince's path is blocked by a fearsome black dragon, inseparable from the rocky mountain landscape. This monstrous dragon has the same sinewy body, long snout, and tufted hair as the creature seen in the Qazvin painting. Both dragons belong to their surrounding landscapes. Dissimilarly, however, the Qazvin dragon sits crouched and small in the

[69] Paul Joslin. "Boar." Encyclopædia Iranica. December 15, 1989. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/boar-sus-scrofa-pers.
[70] Ibid.

mural. His mouth is closed, and his claws withdrawn. This time, the dragon is not a formidable challenge to be conquered--he has already been beaten, and sits small above the shah's throne, a testament to the ruler's own prowess.

Cutting across to the lower right area of the wall painting, a Persian leopard prowls across the fauna [figure 34]. Indicated by his stocky body and signature spots, the leopard strikes a pose very similar to the lion in the upper left. While this choice was likely made in part due to the shape of the space the wall painting occupies, it is also a dynamic choice. The Persian leopard (now, and in Safavid times) largely occupies the northern region of Iran, nearest the Alborz Mountains.[71] The Persian leopard is one of the largest leopard species in the world. An intimidating athlete, able to traverse land quickly as well as climb, the leopard is an apex predator. Leopards are also frequently referenced in Persian poetry, including text from the author of the great Persian book of kings (*Shahnama)*, Firdowsi.[72] Leopards do have a precedent for their presence in paint, as well. In one of the most vibrant and colorful images from the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp titled "The Court of Gayumars", the pelt of the Persian leopard is donned by every human figure [figure 35]. In the early reign of Gayumars, the first king of Persia, he and all his subjects exclusively wore leopard pelts. While this alone points towards the elevated status of the leopard in Persian art and popular culture, there are also animated animals in the lower half of the scene [figure 36]. Leopards crawl out from the polychrome rocks. Interestingly, boars and lions are also present in this scene. They all

[71] Eskandar Firouz. "Leopard." Encyclopædia Iranica. July 20, 2005. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/leopard-panthera-pardus-pers-palang-1.
[72] Ibid.

seem to be part of the same narrative package when it comes to visual storytelling--wild creatures that prostrate themselves in front of a worthy king.

The last figure in the wall painting is feasibly the most perplexing. Opposite the lion, a large human-like creature stands on its hind legs [figure 37]. Again encased in slender branches and faint leaves, this creature is perched on a large rock. Reared up, the creature bends one leg as if stepping forward and in action. It holds both arms up, hoisting up another large rock, ready to hurl it at the leopard or some enemy out of the scene. Its eyes are clear and large, and its mouth is open in rage as if it was letting out a ferocious yell. The snout is long, and its body is furry. One possible answer for the animal in question may lie in lost wall paintings of the Chehel Sotoun in Qazvin. Generally attributed to Shah Tahmasp, the building featured many niches (including a painted *muqarnas* ceiling) and a wide array of wall paintings [figure 38]. Many of the small niches originally contained imagery of a bear throwing a boulder down at other animals.[73]

While the depiction in the Qazvin painting may not immediately summon imagery of a bear, the pose itself is familiar. In the mid-16th century Safavid artists were experimenting with figural imagery on silk textiles. It was a trend that would last for about 100 years, and was a shift that most agree was driven by a shift in communicative messaging.[74] One of the new images circulating during this time period was of a dragon-slayer from the *Shahnama* seen in a silk outer garment from the 3rd quarter of the 16th

[73] Canby, p. 67.
[74] Galina Lassikova (2010) Hushang the Dragon-slayer: Fire and Firearms in Safavid Art and Diplomacy,Iranian Studies, 43:1, 29-51, DOI: 10.1080/00210860903451204. P. 29.

century [figure 39], and in a velvet from the same time period [figure 40]. In these, a hero raises a huge rock above his head. Both arms are lifted high, and one knee is bent in action. In the case of the silk garment, the dragon-slayer is also stepping onto a rock as he lunges towards the encroaching dragon [figure 41]. This dragon-slayer pose is the same posture the bear holds in the Qazvin painting. Recent research on the imagery has suggested that the dragon-slayer is modeled after Hushang, an early hero in the text of the *Shahnama* whose story reads as such: "Traveling in the mountains with a group of courtiers, Shah Hushang saw a terrible black serpent. He reacted immediately by throwing a stone. The serpent jumped back and the stone smashed against the rock, producing a spark: thus fire was discovered."[75] This imagery may have been adopted by the Safavids as a way to underscore their new power in weaponry and firearms, closely affiliated with Shah Hushang's legendary power in the harnessing of fire. With these new luxurious, image-filled, textiles being frequently given as diplomatic gifts, the imagery of the dragon-slayer was intended to convey the Safavids military prowess to potential enemies, such as the Ottoman. Thus, the image of the dragon-slayer became intertwined with the political success of Shah Tahmasp.[76] It may be that the artists responsible for this scene recognized merely the pose as one of power and political messaging, and wanted to incorporate these ideas into their painting of dynamic animals.

While this court scene is , the plant life must not be ignored. In the middle of the scene, forming a grounding element and a central axis, is a portal leading outside [figure

[75] Ibid, p.32.
[76] Ibid, p.51.

42]. It is right behind the servant who kneels desperately in front of the throned shah. A thick black curtain is pulled and fastened to one side of this window, allowing a view. In contrast to this dark curtain, the white of a sycamore tree features in the portal. This garden view through the window enhances the connection between the indoor and outdoor spaces. The peek of outdoor space also alludes to the "ever-extendable capability" that belongs to gardens.[77] While only choice excerpts of the flora are shared with the painting's viewer, these hint at the existence of a garden. With no indication of its size or landscape, the garden's proportions are free to be imagined by the viewer, perhaps extending across vast acreage.

Other bits of the garden appear at the very top of this painting [figure 43]. Above each woman in the window, a cypress tree culminates. This pairing is not unusual, as women are frequently compared to cypress trees in Persian poetry; the slender and graceful figure of the beloved comparable only to such a stately tree. The top of the sycamore tree (whose base was seen through the lower window) also extends over the festivities, its leaves painted in the colors of autumn. If the cypress trees are meant to refer to the women, then the sycamore tree may be associated with the shah over whom its leaves bend. Strong and expansive, it crowns the party. As featured in the accompanying garden scene, the sycamore's fall leaves seem to be somewhat of an anomaly. While cherry and almond trees bear the blooms of spring, the sycamore is clearly in fall, with leaves of red, gold, and dark green. No artistic choice made accidentally, the shift of seasons with the sycamore is intended to communicate. In

[77] Gharipour, "Persian Gardens and Pavilions", p. 137.

keeping with the Sufi theme made incarnate by the young and old man who sit sequestered in a corner, the sycamore in fall may symbolize the transitional aspects of the seasons, as life moves between the natal facets of spring and the associations winter carries of age.

From the tips of the distinguished cypress trees to the bottom of the logs that burn underneath the roasted fowl, the painting is one ripe with movement and excitement. Sufi themes penetrate the image, beginning with the young and old man in hushed conversation, sharing a cup of wine, and are echoed at the top of the image by two ducks poised in a similar and intimate fashion. Inseparable from the Safavid notion of kingship itself, the Sufi imagery in these scenes carries a social message. Servants and fierce animals alike crouch in subservience to the enthroned shah. Although the image is indeed a celebratory one, it is thick with the subtext of what the members are celebrating. As people hurry to attend and please the shah, so too do the painted animals bend their knee. The trees bend towards him. Every time the viewer's eye rests, it is met with another affirmation of the shah's worthiness. No feature is too small to be endowed with meaning. While flora is sparse in this court scene, what little is present reiterates a political and social purpose. Even more significantly, this scene takes place outdoors, within a garden. It is the garden that serves as a worthy platform for these displays of courtly splendor, rituals of royal respect, celebration, and romance. It is only the garden pavilion that could host simultaneous fowl-roasting and the throne of the king; host to action perpetuated by the shah's will, for his pleasure, at his command, and in his presence, a microcosm of the chain of command in daily life.

Chapter 4: The Qazvin Garden Painting

Following the geometric green tile that make up the floor, we arrive at last in the garden scene on the facing folio [figure 1]. The green floor takes up the same shape as it did in the court scene, and where the platform stood inside the court pavilion, a garden wall now divides the space. This time, a sycamore stands in the center of the image, though again seen through a portal. Overall, the image can be divided into thirds, much like the court scene. In the upper half of the scene, two small, open kiosks are divided by a small pool of water. In the horizontal center of the image is the large sycamore tree, the garden fence, and a few human figures. And lastly, there lies the green paved lower courtyard, crowded with life.

The calligraphy has thus far been interpreted from the garden scene painting. It seems to be an excerpt from *Majnoon and Leyli*, one of the 5 poems of the *Khamsa* and a deeply romantic, metaphorical love story. The bottom left portion of the text, however, seems to be a version of the story from Amir Khosrow Dehlavi, while the upper left margin is Nizami's version. The legible text from Dehlavi altogether reads:

"Since in two manuscripts prior to this one
I authored texts representing my views,
I heard a voice coming from the Holy Spirit
Saying: 'O you whose lips have opened my ears
You did not compose your imagination and illusions,
But you exercised a legitimate/Godly sorcery
Now you'd better that in this reflect

Not become lazy and idle, in the way of producing worthy words"

This text may have been added afterwards, based on its unfinished nature. Additionally, unlike other Safavid paintings, the text does not interact with the image, such as the text from a near-contemporaneous folio from the *Mantiq al-tayr* (Language of the Birds) [figure 3]. In this painting, there can be little doubt that the page itself was designed with the intention of highlighting the text, with space carved out to allow key verses to be in close proximity to the action they are describing. In either case, with the Qazvin paintings, the text around the images was likely a separate addition by someone in order to summon, based on the excerpt of the text above, ideas of divine inspiration in a garden context.

Let's begin, as in the previous image, with the lower right-hand. On the right of the lower pavilion, a plump courtier and Indian youths (usually represented with darker skin) bring gifts to the neighboring courtly painting [figure 44].[78] The courtier, with his thick white beard, twists his head to look up at those bringing gifts above him--he may be comparing his offerings to theirs. He wears a luxurious brocade overcoat. Peculiarly, he seems to have a sword tucked through the back of his pants or lower cloak. It lifts the hem of his garment, exposing the orange lining. Safavids typically equipped their swords by letting them dangle from the waistband (as in this portrait of Shah Abbas [figure 45]). Dangling at a distance, they were liable to spin. It may be that the playful lift of the merchant's cloak by his weapon indicates his speed as he rushes towards court, eager to

[78] Abolala Soudavar. *Reassessing Early Safavid Art and History: Thirty Five Years after Dickson & Welch, 1981*. Houston: Abolala Soudavar, 2016. P. 17.

the be the first to present himself. The three youths he leads behind him carry stacks of colorful textiles. They follow the older man in size order from largest to smallest; oldest to youngest, another reminder of the cycle and progression of time. The children exchange glances, maybe nervous to enter such a prestigious setting. Above this group of travelers, another cluster of emissaries hurries towards the throne [figure 46]. To the far right of the image, an older gentleman stands in dark blue with an orange *pirahan* [figure 47]. His hands clasped together in front of him, and his feet together, he seems to be peacefully contemplating the music and watching the scene unfold. Much like the older man who stood behind the lowest window in the court scene, he seems content to watch while others run past him.

And run they do: eclipsing part of his body, an unbearded man in crisp white moves hurriedly past. His body is dramatically twisted, knees bent in quick movement. His head is turned impossibly backwards; his distress made clear by raised eyebrows and parted lips. His front hand lifts an incredibly thin black cane. His back hand is raised emphatically in a gesture that beckons to those behind them, urging them to hurry [figure 48]. Three young men stand behind him, dressed in blue, red, and pale yellow. Each of them holds several gold semi-circles [figure 49]. What these are is uncertain, but their status is confirmed by their materiality alone. The last of their party, a man in flowing orange pants leads a light blue horse [figure 50]. The man's legs bent eagerly, he seems to struggle desperately to hurry the horse along. Likely presented as a diplomatic gift, the horse joins the group of young men headed towards the seated shah.

The horse itself is a large and impressive specimen. A typical Arabian breed, its head is small and its neck bends gracefully. While the color choice of light blue seems unusual, it is a persistent choice for the breed, as seen in a slightly later Safavid portrait of a horse [figure 51]. The Qazvin horse clearly belabors the traveler who brings it as a gift to the shah—the man tries to hurry along, but the horse's open mouth and exposed teeth suggest that it is resistant to the tugs of the man. Two of its heavy-hoofed legs are tied together with a thick rope. It is clearly a strong and spirited animal, yet another to be brought before the throne and subjugated, much like the animals featured in the wall painting. Below the horse, a small brown dog prances along, mimicking the horse's gait [figure 52]. This playful touch may be yet another reference to the power over nature held by Safavid kings, as flora and fauna alike fall into line before the throne. The dog appears to wear a dark collar, however, and thus may also be another gift for the king, since it was reported that the Safavids also enjoyed receiving dogs as diplomatic gifts.[79] In any case, it seems a playful air surrounds the frolicking pup, as it is larger in size than the neighboring child who carries textiles.

The left side of this lower garden pavilion is also caught in a moment of movement, although this group of men contrarily flees away from the court [figure 53]. Above the horse's hindquarters, a large man in red, blue, and yellow lunges forward and strikes out at a beardless youth. This attacking man clasps one hand around his sword's white sheath while his other hand extends, holding what may be a brown cane. With the

[79] Rudi P Matthee. "Gift Giving." Encyclopædia Iranica. December 15, 2001. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gift-giving-iv.

cane, he strikes the shoulder of a bald man in blue, causing him to contort and cry out in pain. No doubt surprised by the attack, the victim's lunge forward caused his white turban to fly off. As he falls forward, this victim grabs the shoulder of a man in front of him for balance. This man twists his head backwards to examine the commotion. Another man in undecorated blue clothing also runs from the attacker, with his upper body and head rotated, arms raised, in order to plead for exemption. Below the man in blue, another man attempts to flee the scene. He raises one hand to hold and thus secure his own white turban, hoping to avoid the same humiliating fate he has just witnessed. A last youth in red pants also runs, his hands arranged into a gesture conveying confusion and frustration.

While it may at first seem strange to feature a violent disturbance within this painted scene, aggression and celebration are part of the same Safavid courtly package. It was not uncommon for Safavid scenes, as in their lives, to feature "the pairing of conviviality/hospitality on one hand and battle/hostility on the other."[80] Like yin and yang, violence only exists in a world where peace may be felt absent, and vice versa. The celebratory feast in the court-scene next door is only made possible by the implication of a conquest worth toasting to. Where "prowess legitimized victory, the feast commemorates."[81] The outbreak of a fight at the bottom of the garden scene may be homage to this sentiment, that the physical conquests of the Safavids are manifold, and that this spirit of aggression will result in the revelry of success.

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[80] Babaie, p. 224.
[81] Ibid.

In a similar space division as in the partnered scene, these men in the lower garden courtyard--either travelers eager to deliver gifts, or young troublemakers--are separated from the higher status areas of the garden by a simple gate [figure 54]. The gate's bars are sparse and the gate is largely transparent. Like attitudes towards the performative aspects of kingship, the lives of the elites may be seen through the gate, but not fully engaged with. It is the illusion of involvement that is paramount, and while the garden gate is still a boundary, it may conceivably be slipped through. Thus, the actual practical function of the gate is less significant than its function as a tool of socioeconomic messaging: space is being divided, and thus are the people who would occupy it.

Moving at last into some truly verdant space, the viewer passes through the gate in the garden fence. In the center of the gate, two wooden doors are thrown back to allow a view, while a young man in red and blue steps through the gate and down into the courtyard below [figure 55]. One white shoe steps through the threshold, while one hand clutches onto the trunk of the sycamore tree behind him. Similar to the court scene, the central opening in this image reveals this stately tree. In both paintings, the tree is centered in the image. In both paintings, it is seen through a window, or a gate, purposefully being revealed to the viewer as though it were a sacred image, and that access to a view of the tree is an event and a privilege.

The sycamore tree, or more commonly known throughout Persia as the plane tree, has become something of a symbol of national identity for Iran. It is widespread, growing all over the country. It occurs spontaneously, as well as being a favorite in landscaping

and garden design. Its popularity is due to several factors: it is fast-growing, and hardy. It provides shade with its wide tripartite leaves, often compared by poets to human hands.[82] The tree is also incredibly long-lasting, and some plane trees are thousands of years old. In popular culture, the sycamore is frequently mentioned in poetry. One 14th-century vizier claimed the plane tree as a blessed tree, growing wherever it is planted, resistant to rot and low maintenance in care.[83] Timur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty, cultivated a plane tree garden.[84] The plane tree is also credited with some number of miraculous properties, such as curing illnesses and finding husbands for devout women.[85] Aesthetically, the sycamore is easily recognized by its pale white bark and twisting trunk. Its bark is smooth. And in the fall, the leaves of the sycamore change into various autumnal hues, multi-colored examples often within one plant. Additionally valued for its shade-giving abilities, most sycamores are notable for their wide canopy of leaves. It is a tree that is recognizable for most residents throughout Persia, due to its ubiquitous nature. It is a tree that has come to have many significant cultural implications--when cultivated, it marks spaces of respite and shade. It also marks a space of spirituality, often conferred with the ability to heal believers or grant wishes. It is a tree deeply connected to both national identity, and cultural underpinnings that signify a deeply Safavid intersection of the practical and the spiritual.

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[82] Husang A'lam. "Cenar." Encyclopædia Iranica. December 5, 1990. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cenar-the-oriental-plane-tree-platanus-orientalis-l.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

In the case of the garden painting, this sycamore indeed presents an impressive vault of foliage. Its branches cut in front of the garden gate, showing its untameable spirit [figure 56]. Many small brown birds roost within its leaves [figure 57]. On the right, its multicolored leaves droop over a spray of bright blue flowers with yellow centers, which may be blue jasmine. Two blooms and one bud are depicted behind the back of a servant, appearing uncultivated and spontaneous; freestanding. In the flower's graceful stoop they seem to imitate the shape of the servant, with his back rounded in an offering of food to the courtiers in the pavilion above him [figure 58]. In front of this servant's body, red and white flowers bloom. While growing along the riverbank, they also correspond to his body shape, accenting his silhouette and functioning to highlight his actions as he offers up a covered tray, his head bent back. At his feet, a small stream of water runs past.

This water feature seems to originate from under the upper right pavilion, although its source is out of the frame. Lined and laden with bichrome river rocks of blue and pink, it runs downhill. It runs in front of the servant offering food to the pavilion, and splits in two close to where the servant stands. One vein of this stream runs past a gardener, and wraps around the right side of the lower green-tiled courtyard. The other, larger vein passes behind the large plane tree and wraps around the left of the courtyard. This stream flows from the top right of the scene, from much the same position as the shah of the neighboring court scene [figure 59]. The river originates from the seat of the wealthy courtiers at play within the pavilions, who seem bubbling and giddy in much the same way as the stream. This positioning echoes both the function of the *qanat* system

(flowing downhill) and the organization of wealth. In this image, as in Safavid life, water flows from the seat of power.

Across the bank from the servant offering food to the courtiers in the pavilion is a large gardener [figure 60]. Compared to the servant, his presence looms large. His torso, for example, is nearly doubled in width. With both hands, he clasps the long wooden handle of a spade. He is barefoot, with his back foot lifting off the ground in order to apply more pressure to his work. Distracted, his bearded chin is bent towards the earth--almost as if he does not notice the party at hand. Across the garden from him is his partner, another gardener in light orange garb [figure 61]. They are separated by the large sycamore tree. This second gardener, with light beard and hair, is also barefoot. He, similarly, holds the elongated handle of a shovel. His hands are reared high as he plunges the tool into the earth, one naked foot perched on the top of the shovel to apply weight behind the strike. Once again, the gardener is larger than the figures that surround him. He, too, is bent over engaged in his task, unaware or uninterested in the party. Behind him, an almond tree is in bloom. These punctuating blooms are a testament to the hard work he is currently engaged in. His labor makes the party possible; makes the garden a pleasant place where parties and people may thrive. It is unusual to have such a political and social scene that also depicts lower-class laborers hard at work. One would usually assume that laborers would not be welcome in such an environment, and would not be engaged in work as courtiers enjoyed the grounds. Perhaps, however, the prominence of these two large gardeners in this painting sends two messages--that the garden in the scene was built by a ruler who had all manner of workers at his disposal, as a powerful

and wealthy figure. Secondly, the large gardeners call the viewer's attention towards the fact that the space is, indeed, a cultivated garden. It is designed and maintained, and in this scene, alive with prosperous blossoms. The presence of the gardeners asks the viewer to note that it is indeed the garden where animals and plants are hosted and controlled, where feasting and fighting occur, and where all of these myriad allusions to kingship are staged.

Finally, we arrive at the last and highest third of the garden painting. Grazed by the tips of the plane tree, this last piece of the puzzle largely takes place within two gazebos. Let's begin with the structure on the right-hand side. We return to the rather scrawny servant lifting up a plate of food--from the pavilion there comes another set of hands, reaching to receive the covered tray. This man is joined by three others within the right pavilion--one in red, one in light blue, and one in dark blue brocade [figure 62]. The man in red clutches at his blue waistband, in a similar fashion to several of the men in the court scene. With his other hand, he gestures towards a bearded man in light blue. The two clearly are engaged in an enthusiastic conversation. The man in light blue returns this emotion, both hands raised in communication. Both of their bodies, however, remain lax and at ease, enjoying the discussion as well as the pleasant environment. Landscapes were utilized to "give an image of a peaceful, prosperous kingdom," and nothing seems to embody this idea more than wealthy men, situated among thriving cherry blossoms, deep in a conversation that seems both aggressive and enjoyable.[86] The last figure in this

[86] Mika Natif. *Mughal Occidentalism: Artistic Encounters between Europe and Asia at the Courts of India, 1580-1630*. Leiden: Brill, 2018. P. 43.

pavilion is the young man in darker blue. His hands wrapped wistfully around a pillar, he stares up at the young and old man who are wrapped up in dialogue. In front of him, a golden ewer.

This brick-red pavilion itself is topped with floriated embellishments, adding to the sense of denseness and the overall impression of blossoms. Behind this pavilion, a cherry tree is found. Rich with both bud and blossom, the flowers are a soft pink and layered with many petals. With the mature flowers serving as beautiful testament to work done in the past, the abundance of young buds points towards a promising future. Understanding of climate and weather was a crucial skill of war, and the cherry tree in bloom (and yet still with many blooms waiting to open) appears as a reminder that nature is and will continued to be controlled triumphantly. Wispy Asianate clouds blow overhead. To the left of this first kiosk, among the cyclonic clouds, are two birds in flight [figure 63]. They are likely a pair of falcons, or more specifically, Eurasian kestrels. They feature the characteristic darker feathers around the eye, a slightly yellowed beak, and dark spots on the brown body [figure 64]. The Eurasian kestrel is widespread across Iran and all of Asia, and is one of the most common birds in more elevated, semi-arid areas, such as the foothills of the Alborz Mountains wherein Qazvin is situated. As part of the falcon family, the kestrel is known as a predator, and a hunter. Falcons are no stranger to Safavid art, as they are frequently painted and especially so in conjunction with courtiers. They are a status symbol, and many Safavid elite engaged in *bazdari*, or the sport of falcon-keeping. Keeping such a bird was expensive, and hunting with one's personal falcon became quite a fashionable pastime of the wealthy and elite, allowing them to

demonstrate an air of military skill during times of peace.[87] They were sometimes offered as diplomatic gifts, as well. Shah Tahmasp's grandson, Shah Abbas I, even built a small mausoleum for his favorite falcon after its untimely death.[88] Peace and war always go hand in hand, and while this feast may be a celebration, it was also a reminder for whichever royal or courtier who owned this painting that they were on the side of an empire who was fierce; who even nature's predators bow before.

Of course, the sky itself also repeats this message of grandeur and favor. It is vibrant and unmissable gold leaf, punctuated by falcons and delicate clouds. Similarly to the heterogeneity of seasons presented by the sycamore tree, it is almost as if the actual reality of nature and the landscape does not matter to the scene. The sky is neither blue nor some setting shade of red--it is surreal gold. Clearly, the Safavids were less interested in some mirrored and literal depiction of a garden than they were in endowing this already powerful space with other layers of meaning. They were interested in utilizing the physical garden as a stage, but when it came to painting, they relished the opportunity to depart from what is possible and instead demonstrate the ideal; the metaphysics of supremacy. This is the crux of the argument--that painted gardens are indeed serving many of the same functions of literal gardens, but that they are also being utilized as a less opaque stage for the symbolism that drives the creation of these spaces. As many scholars have already noted on the nature of Iranian paintings in general, perspectival play is commonly employed as a way to maximize the space of a painting. This lends

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[87] Husang A'lam. "Bazdari." Encyclopædia Iranica. December 15, 1989. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bazdari-or-bazyari-lit.
[88] Ibid.

itself to artists who feel comfortable using scale, color, and placement as exceptional tools of communication. Every choice is more calculated in paint, and the options for expression are endless and unlimited by the confines of reality.

Jumping across the painting for now, the second red pavilion appears more raucous than the previous [figure 65]. On the right-most of the structure, another youth in light blue clutches a gold piece of fabric in much the same way he clings to the kiosk's pillar. His body indicates his longing to be included in the conversation of the young and old man in the center. His head, however, is turned back towards a pair of boys within the kiosk. These two, one in brown and one in green, stand in an off-kilter embrace, perhaps intoxicated. Their bodies are very close, while their arms are wrapped around each other's shoulders. The youth in green reaches out towards the pining boy in blue, as if beckoning the loner to join their debauchery. It's easy to imagine that the pair of youths are singing, with their hands gesticulating wildly. The taller boy, in brown, extends a hand delicately towards the chin of a bearded man in pale yellow. With his white beard, this older man looks up fondly at the youth. It is a romantic scene, tense with adoration and also potent with the same juxtaposition the seasonal anomaly offers. While this youth stands and dances joyously, silly and energetic, the older man is crouched in the corner, his dancing days behind him. The two are a study in contrasts, but nonetheless, parts of the same system of time. The youth stands in front of another cherry tree, overwhelmed with flowers. A branch of this tree bends over the head of the boy, tracing his silhouette as he drops his chin to look towards the bearded man. Below them, another youth steps away from the pavilion, a satisfied and somewhat affected grin across his face.

Separating the two pavilions, and above the noble sycamore tree, is a cultivated hexagonal pool [figure 66]. Two paired ducks stand on the right of it, preening themselves. They are the physical counterparts to the gray drawings that perch atop the mural in the neighboring scene. Within the pool itself is the playful rear-end of another brown duck, who dives underwater in hunt. This is not only another reference to the physical aggressiveness that permeates the scene, but also implies the presence of fish within the water. A white swan also sits atop the water, elegant and in stark contrast to the darkness of the water.

Above this pool sit two primary figures in the scene, their significance indicated both by their position and their size [figure 67]. Here, as in other areas of the two paintings, the old and the new are pictured together. Compared to the youths in the pavilions who stare longingly at them, these two central figures loom almost monstrous in size. If they were to stand, it appears they would rival the nearby cypress tree that grows between them. An almond tree also grows between them, laden with fluffy white flowers and topped with a bird. Nestled in among the blooms, this younger and an older man sit in conversation, passing a book or some small paintings between them. Their hands placed in their laps, they espouse the Sufi metaphor of love between God and creator, an idea that was often depicted as a romantic encounter between a younger and older man.

The artist who made the textual additions to this scene may have noted these Sufi undertones, and thought text from the Sufi poet Nizami's poems would be the perfect addition to this thriving scene of cosmopolitanism and success. These words not only add

another layer to the history of these well-travelled objects, but also speak to the images' power to communicate Sufi ideals. What may look to modern viewers as a scene of pure celebration in the garden may have communicated spiritual ideas to a Safavid viewer. According to Safavid Sufis such as Shaykh Muhammad'Ali Mu'adhdhin, knowledge is the "most precious flower that blossoms in the garden of human reality." Sufis were very much invested in exploring and widening knowledge, as knowledge is an attribute of God and brings one closer in proximity to God. As said in the Qur'an, "God shall exalt those from among you who have faith and those whom have been given knowledge." The idea of knowledge being given to someone from God is certainly an excerpt of *Khamsa* text the Sufis were interested in, and this idea would have resonated upon viewing the young and old man in this garden scene, passing a text or some paintings between them, deep in conversation. It is important to keep in mind that the political and the spiritual were both significant and intertwined aspects of Safavid kingship. While it may seem that these interpretations are spiritual and resting on Sufi interpretation, Quranic interpretation is a separate entity from the political aspects that a Sufi reading brings to the table. It must be reiterated that the Sufi mindset is itself one of a sacred kingship. Sufism and sovereignty for the Safavids are intertwined, and associating oneself with Sufism as a leader was a political act.

As previously mentioned, the Sufi idea of Godly love was often expressed through a romantic encounter between a young and old man. If these two large figures in the top of the garden seem familiar, it is because this pose and pairing is a common one in painting. The most famous example of such an encounter is a painting from India,

dating to 1630-45 CE [figure 68]. It is perhaps no coincidence that the old man in the Qazvin scene is dressed similarly to Saadi pictured in the rose garden from this later image, both in pale yellow with turbans capped in dark hues. Saadi was a 13th-century Sufi Persian poet whose most famous work, the *Gulistan*, is a semi-autobiographical moralistic epic poem whose title translates to "the Rose Garden." In the preface of the *Gulistan*, Saadi recalls the inspiration for writing this text. In this episode, an older Saadi is lost in contemplation and becomes depressed and despondent with the state of the world, and decides to give up talking, writing, and society. After some time in this mood, a dear friend of Saadi's, devoted to comforting and convincing him to speak again, persuaded Saadi to go on a walk in the spring when the "time of the rose's reign had arrived."[89] The pair spent the night in the garden together, a soothing and beautiful place described by Saadi as

"a beautiful garden, the water of its streams cool and sweet:
Large, spreading trees, the notes of the birds thereon in sweet harmony.
The former filled with tulips of various hues;
The latter loaded with fruits of various kinds.
The breeze under the shade of its trees
Opened out a variegated carpet."[90]

In the morning, when Saadi awakened in this beautiful garden, he found his friend "with a lap full of roses, and sprigs of sweet basil, and hyacinths and fragrant herbs,

[89] Saadī, and John T. Platts. *The Gulistan, Or, Rose Garden of Shaikh Muslihud-Dìn Sadi of Shìràz*. New Delhi, India: Cosmo, 2004. P. xxi.
[90] Saadi, p. xxi.

gathered together" intent on bestowing them as a gift to Saadi in order to cheer him up.[91] Having successfully impressed Saadi, it was in this moment that Saadi decided to write the *Gulistan*, his most well-known masterpiece of poetry. He turns to this friend, whose lap is full of blooms, and says "For the recreation of all beholders...I can compose a book, The Rose Garden, such that the blasts of Autumn will not be able to lay the hand of destruction on its leaves, and the vicissitude of time shall not change the blitheness of its Spring for Autumn's rage." Continuing on, in verse, Saadi writes:

Of what use is a rose leaf to thee?

Carry away a leaf from my rose-garden.

A rose will last for the next five or six days alone

But this rose-garden will bloom forever.[92]

As soon as Saadi declared these intentions, his companion cast the flowers from his lap, as seen in figure 68. These words from Saadi on the origins of his epic reiterate the narrative of painted gardens thus far established—that they are the eternal counterparts of the physical, the emblem of the garden. Painted gardens are the space where wisdom and inspiration do not fade or wither, where the message of inspiration may stand and be delivered for generations of viewers.

However, the literal story of the *Gulistan*'s creation is not the only tale these two figures are telling. Returning to the painting "Saadi in the Rose Garden", the two also send a message about romance and the Sufi metaphor of physical love. As seen in both

[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

this image and the painting from Qazvin, in the majority of homoerotic depictions within painting, there is a noticeable age difference between the two male lovers.[93] The garden setting was often used as a metaphor in poetry for love itself, wherein it becomes a "place for passion and desire, where the natural blends with the human, and the floral with the corporeal."[94] With all the various romantic connotations of the garden in mind, this coupling of the young and old man rather naturally bring about homoerotic interpretations, and the garden becomes a metaphor for desire. In Saadi's tale, "garden and body intermingle, act upon each other, take on qualities of each other. Both are objects of desire, potential sources of joy."[95] The garden becomes not only the host for Sufi metaphors of love and the physical body, but also becomes the body itself. It is where romance is staged and what romance is enacted upon.

In this later Indian example of Saadi, as well as in the earlier example from Qazvin, a young and old man paired up in the garden would certainly have summoned common cultural memories not only of erotic love, but also of famed poet Saadi himself. In the Qazvin painting, a bright pink rose blooms over the older man's shoulder. If he is not Saadi, he is at least intended to evoke Saadi in the mind of the viewer, especially when considering the text from the poet that frames the nearby throne. The young boy who sits across from the master gestures towards his own lap as he hands paintings, or a small book, back to his older counterpart. By his hand, a blue iris winds its way up his

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[93] Francesca Leoni. *Eros and Sexuality in Islamic Art.* "The generative garden: Senuality, male intimacy, and eternity in Govardhan's illustration of Saadi's *Gulistan*", Mika Natif. Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT, USA : Ashgate, 2013. P. 46.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid, p.47.

lower body. This may again be intentionally evocative of the story of Saadi and his night in the garden, where many flowers were spilled from the lap onto the ground of a colorful garden floor.

In considering this garden painting as a whole unit, several ideas can be made clear. Firstly, much as in the court scene, the garden space is one divided by class sensibilities. Much like the exterior walls of a garden would communicate, the landscape belongs to the ruler and is theirs to experience and enjoy. Examining the size of the gardeners, it is clear to see that their role is being uplifted within society, and within the affair of a feast. As it is rather unusual to feature physical workers (and especially so prominently) in a scene of an elite gathering, it can be assumed that the gardeners themselves are being elevated for their role in creating and preserving the garden. Their preeminence may also carry Sufi interpretation, as they suggest the significance of those who are the cultivators of the rose garden. The rose garden, or the spiritual world of Sufism that Saadi presents, must be tended to diligently in order for the reward of blooms. In tandem with this, the poet Saadi is being referenced. These previously mentioned human figures in the scene work in tandem with the wild life--a horse and a dog walk willingly into the courtyard, to be given to a just ruler. A river flows down and wraps itself around the pavilion, embracing it in a gesture that would signify nature's blessing. While various cherry and almond trees erupt with blooms, promising another gold horizon, the sycamore tree stands in autumn, reminding the viewer that the painted garden will stand the test of time. It is no surprise that the plants and animals present

underscore the ideas of celebration and just-rule the paintings present--nature is, after all, at the behest of the righteous.

Conclusion

While much has been said on the spaces physical gardens occupied in pre-modern Persian life, their painted equivalents have often been left out of singular scholastic conversation. In reality, painted gardens serve both a narrative function as well as the functions of their physical counterparts. Every 'real' garden is but a shadow of its painted archetype. The garden is not paradise; it is even superior to paradise. All who enter Quranic paradise desire nothing, so there can be no desire and thus no fulfillment. In the garden, one can long for a ripe fruit and then taste one, experiencing satisfaction at last. In the painted garden, this factor of supply and demand is multiplied as the fruits are ever ripe and reachable, the grass always green and inviting. The ability to supply these painted spaces full of promise required much the same patron as physical royal gardens. Both were created at the behest of a wealthy elite, connected not only to immense resources (of garden and painting creation; space, workshops, expendable income, water) but also to concepts of leisure time and knowledge of Sufi literature and themes, feeling empowered to create socioeconomic divisions between themselves and lower classes with either physical wall or cultural barrier. Both gardens and paintings are tokens of significant economic investment and political wherewithal. In the Keir Collection images, a microcosm of Safavid social life is presented through a scene of feasting and merrymaking. Just as in material life, kingship found its power in performance, and in its observable quality.

It is the garden that plays host to both rulers and concepts of rule. Gardens were spaces for restoration after battle, and victory celebrations after war. They were productive economically, and required extensive capital for their creation. They both produced money, and required it. They were bastions of wealth and social status. They were exclusive spaces, political by nature of both the very real wall they presented as a boundary to lower classes, and in the reflection of the cultivated spaces within. When these spaces are painted, as in the folio from the Keir Collection, each detail is carefully calculated in order to send clear messages within such a small and layered space. In these painted Qazvin gardens, the landscape reflects not only immense prosperity and revelry (presumably after a victory in battle), but also alludes to the subjugation of nature under the wise seated ruler. Shrubs and flowers bloom in celebration of success—a success inseparable from this shah's relationship with his own divinity, relative to the Safavid embrace of Sufism. As some trees burst with spring, the sycamore stands resolute in fall. All over the folio, the young and the old stand together, yet juxtaposed, a reminder of Sufi worldviews. Ultimately, a serious consideration of painted gardens and what is relegated to the status of "background" should be prompted by considering the significance all painted parts offer to such a calculated scene of festivity, celebration, and political and religious success. While these allusions to Sufism may seem like another purely religious interpretation of these spaces, Sufism was a deeply political association. In both the setting itself and in all of the various garden elements within, Sufism and success are intertwined and inescapable within the environment of sacred Safavid kingship.

Figures

Figure 1: Manuscript - Nizami *Khamsa*, c. 1570–1580 Work on paper, Mat dimensions (external): 20 7/8 × 15 3/8 in. (53.02 × 39.05 cm). The Keir Collection of Islamic Art on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art, K.1.2014.145.2

Figure 2: Manuscript - Nizami *Khamsa*, c. 1570–1580, Work on paper, Mat dimensions (external): 20 7/8 × 15 3/8 in. (53.02 × 39.05 cm), The Keir Collection of Islamic Art on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art, K.1.2014.145.2

Figure 3: "The Concourse of the Birds", Folio 11r from a Mantiq al-tair (Language of the Birds), ca. 1600, Painting by Habiballah of Sava (The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

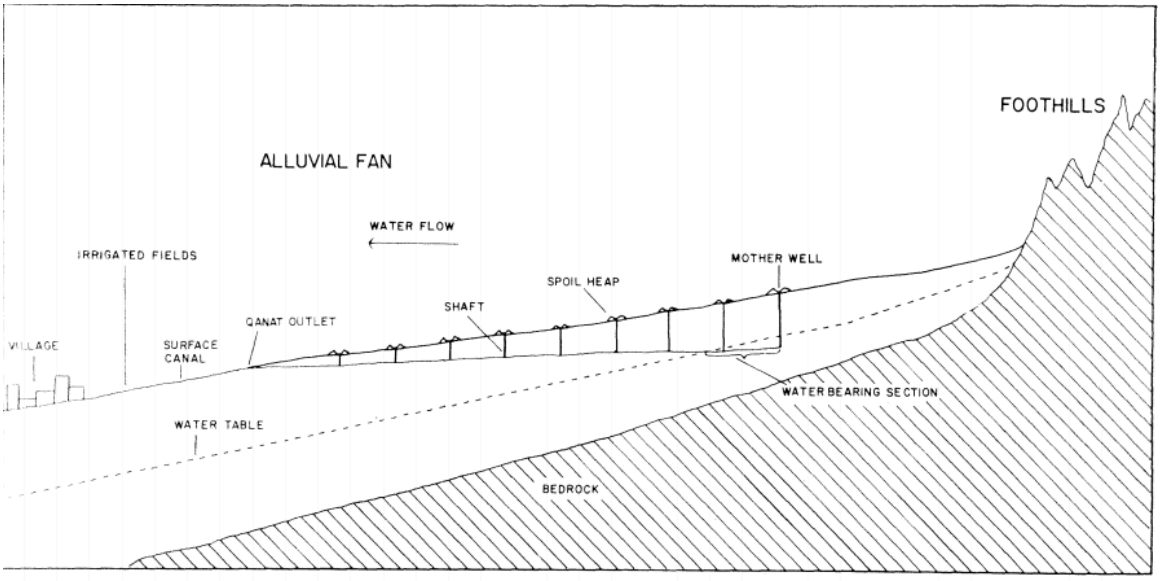

Fig. 1—Cross section of a qanat.

Figure 4: Cross-section of a *qanat*

Figure 5: *Sa'di and the Youth of Kashgar*, Folio from a *Gulistan* (Rose garden) by Sa'di (d. 1292). Ascribed to Bihzad (ca. 1467–1535). Historic Iran (present-day Afghanistan), Herat, Timurid dynasty, dated AH 891/1486 CE. Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper. The Freer Gallery of Art, LTS1995.2.33.

Figure 6: "The Shah's Wise Men Approve of Zal's Marriage", Folio 86v from the Shahnama (Book of Kings) of Shah Tahmasp, ca. 1525-30, Iran, Tabriz, The Metropolitan Museum

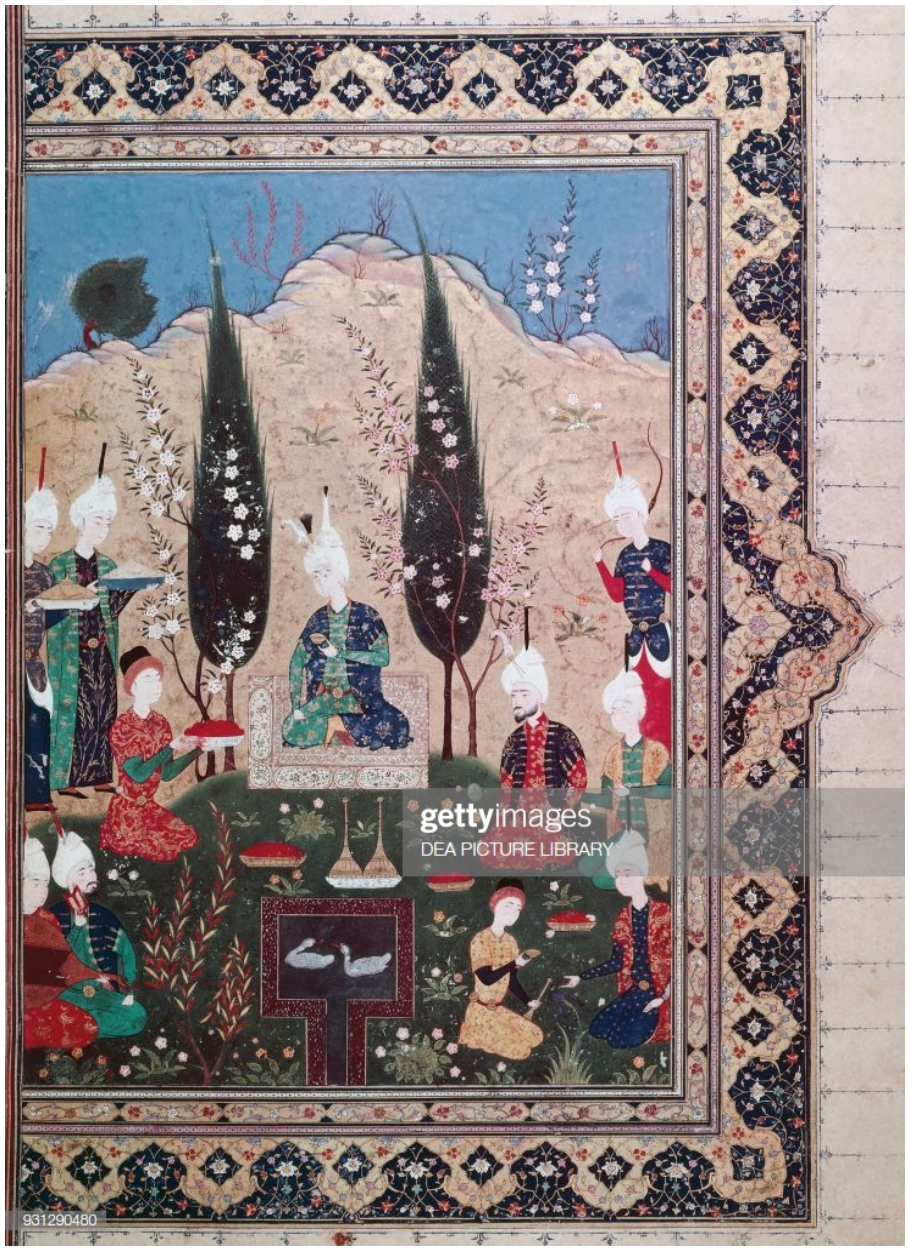

Figure 7: Shah Tahmasp in the garden with his courtiers, Safavid miniature from the Shahnama, or Book of the Kings, by Firdousi, (ca 935-ca 1026), Persian manuscript 489, folio 2 verso, 16th century, De Agostini Picture Library

Figure 8: Detail from Figure 2

Figure 9: Detail from figure 2, young servant carrying food

Figure 10: Detail from figure 2, a row of shoes

Figure 11: Detail from figure 2, clustered group of guests

Figure 12: Detail from figure 2, food being prepared

Figure 13: Detail from figure 2, guest and hookah base

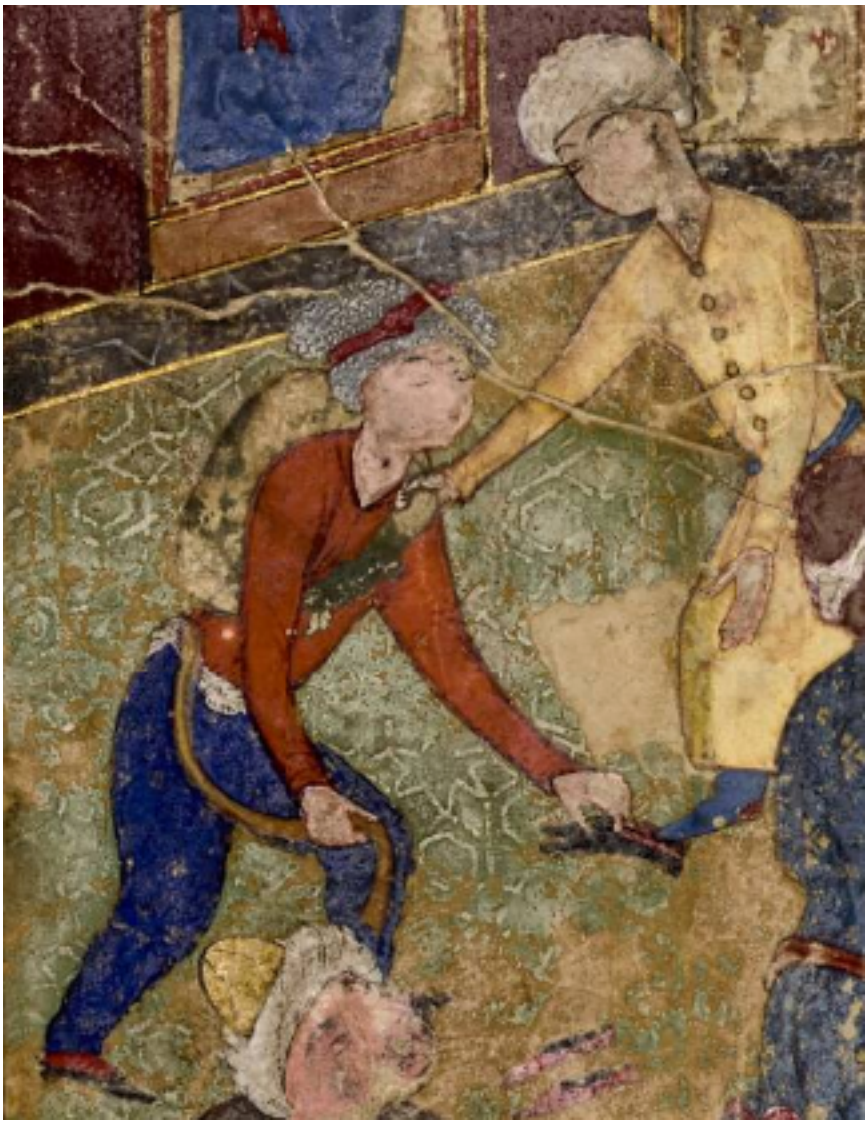

Figure 14: Detail from figure 2, a servant removing shoes

Figure 15: Detail from figure 2, musicians

Figure 16: Detail from figure 2, serving vessels

Figure 17: Detail from figure 2, servant and tray

Figure 18: Detail from figure 2, a pair of guests

Figure 19: Detail from figure 2, servant attending to a courtier

Figure 20: Detail from figure 2, more serving vessels

Figure 21: Detail from figure 2, the Shah

Figure 22: Detail from figure 2, servant

Figure 23: Detail from figure 2, pair of servants

Figure 24: Detail from figure 2, man in lower right window

Figure 25: Detail from figure 2, two figures in the upper right window

Figure 26: Detail from figure 2, woman in upper left window

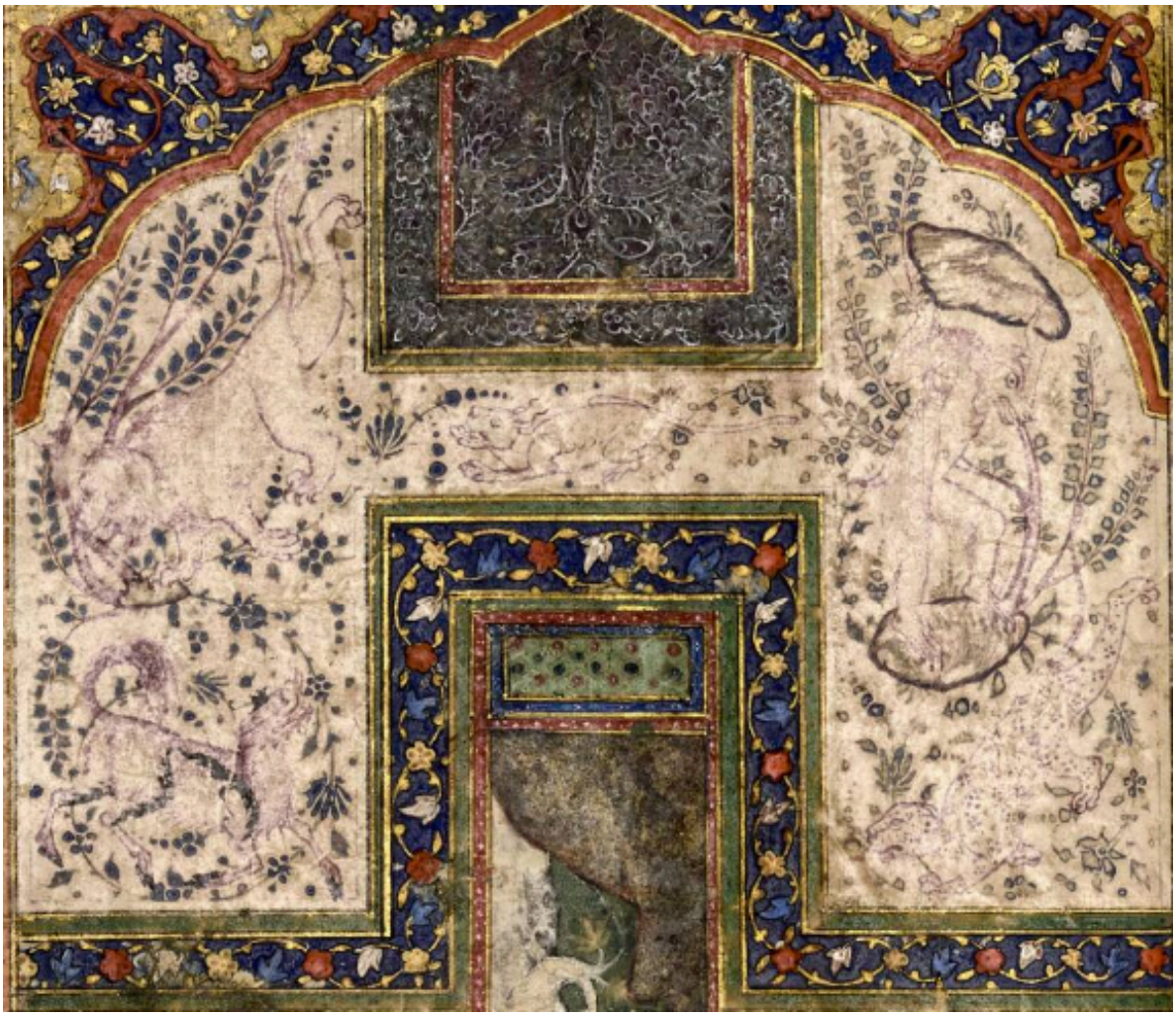

Figure 27: Detail from figure 2, grisaille wall painting

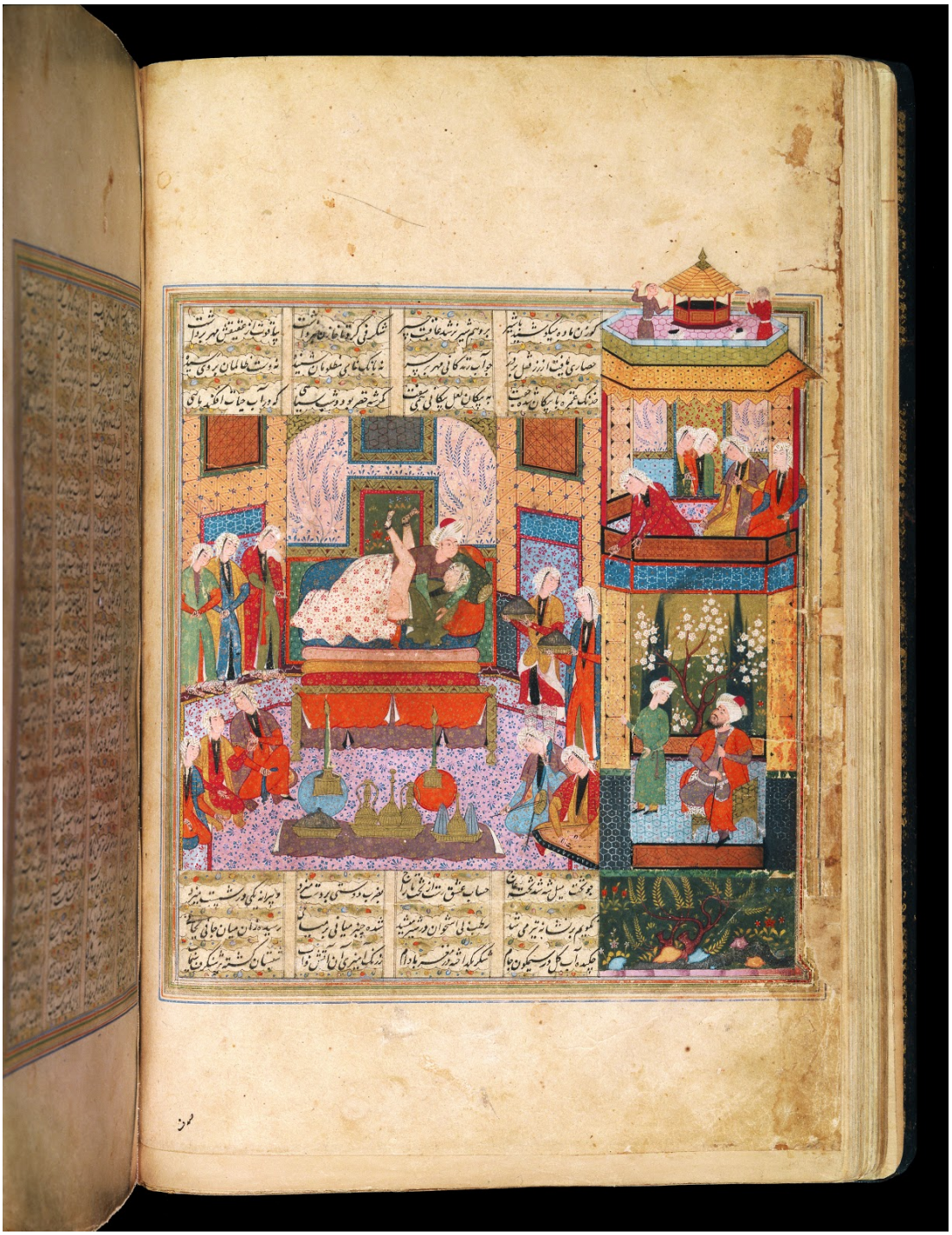

Figure 28: A copy of Nizami's *Khamsa*: "The Consummation of the Marriage Between Khusraw and Shirin", Iran, Shiraz, c. 1560, The David Collection

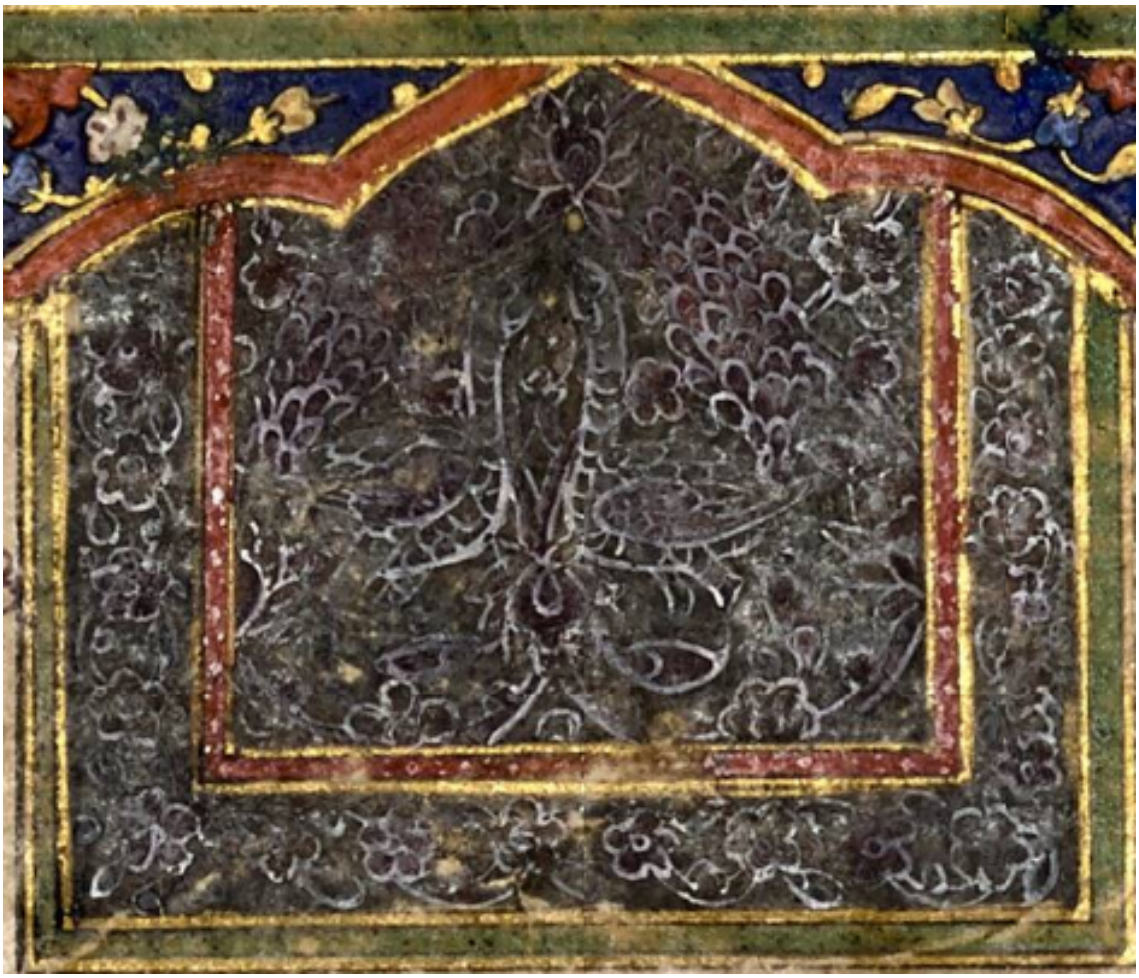

Figure 29: Detail from figure 2, detail of wall mural

Figure 30: Detail from figure 2, lion

Figure 31: Detail from figure 2, boar

Figure 32: Detail from figure 2, dragon

Figure 33: "Isfandiyar's Third Course: He Slays a Dragon", Folio 434v from the Shahnama (Book of Kings) of Shah Tahmasp,ca. 1530, The Metropolitan Museum

Figure 34: Detail from figure 2, leopard

Figure 35: "Court of Gayumars", *Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp I* (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto), c.1522

Figure 36: Detail from figure 34

Figure 37: Detail from figure 2, bear

Figure 38: The remnants of wall paintings in Chehel Sotoun

Figure 39: Khil‘at, sewn of lampas. Iran, third quarter of the sixteenth century, Moscow Armory Chamber, Inv. 25668.

Figure 40: Velvet. Iran, third quarter of the sixteenth century, Washington Textile Museum, no. 3.123.

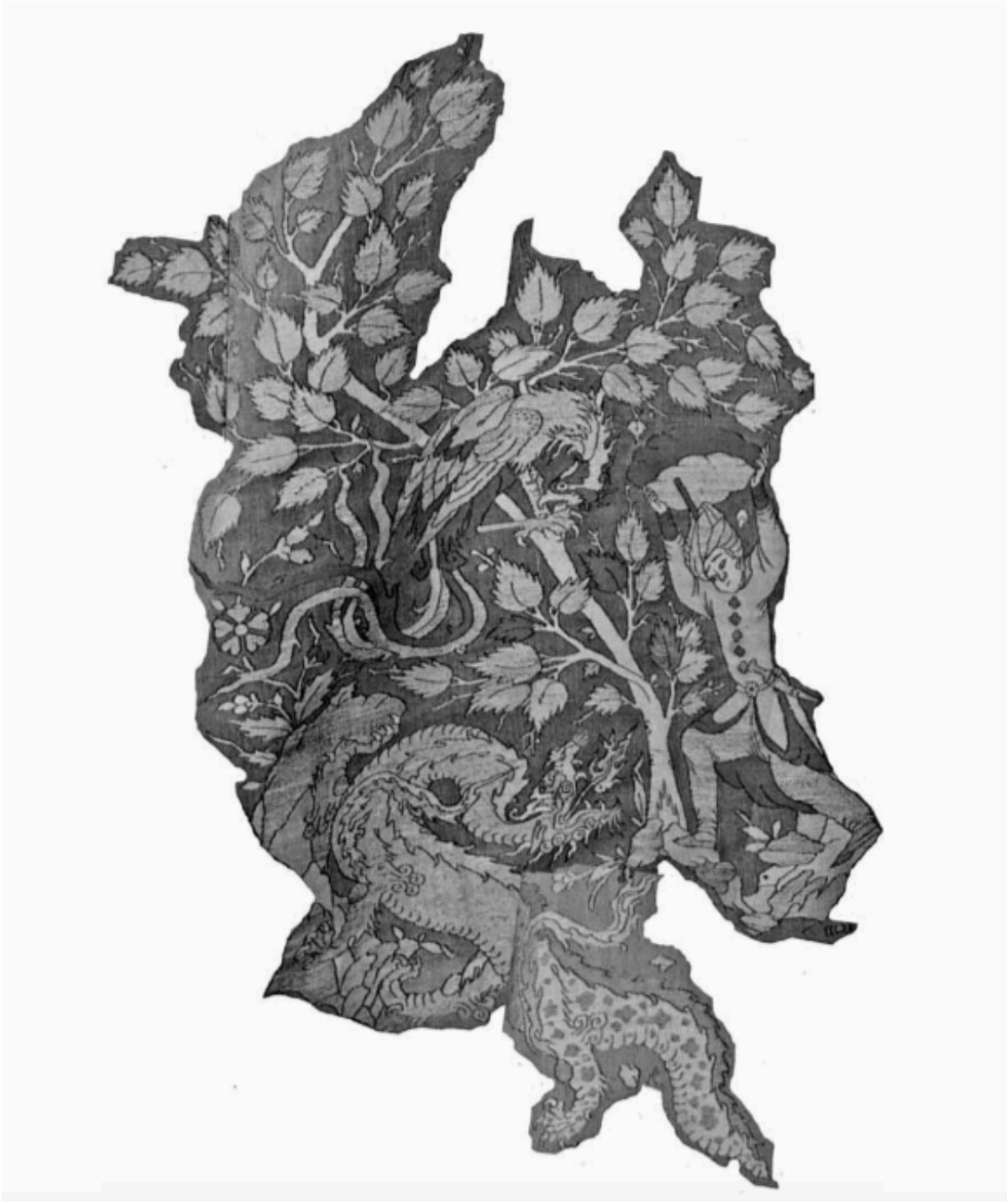

Figure 41: Detail from figure 39, Lampas pattern unit. Reconstruction.

Figure 42: Detail from figure 2, portal leading outside

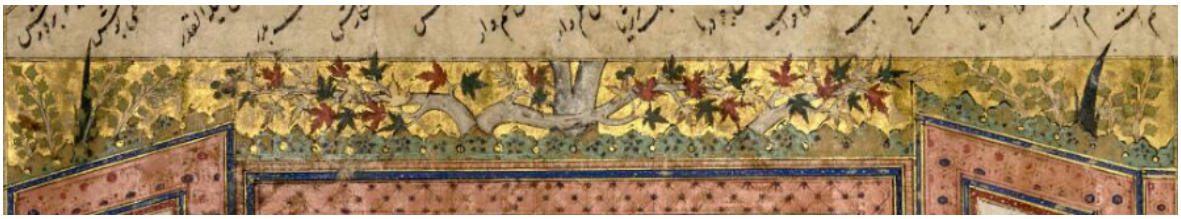

Figure 43: Detail from figure 2, uppermost flora

Figure 44: Detail from figure 1, a merchant and Indian youths

Figure 45: Portrait of Shah Abbas 1, Chehel Sotoun, Isfahan, ca. 1542-66

Figure 46: Detail from figure 1, group of travelers bringing gifts

Figure 47: Detail from figure 1, old spectator

Figure 48: Detail from figure 1, beckoning traveler

Figure 49: Detail of figure 1, travelers with gifts

Figure 50: Detail from figure 1, horse

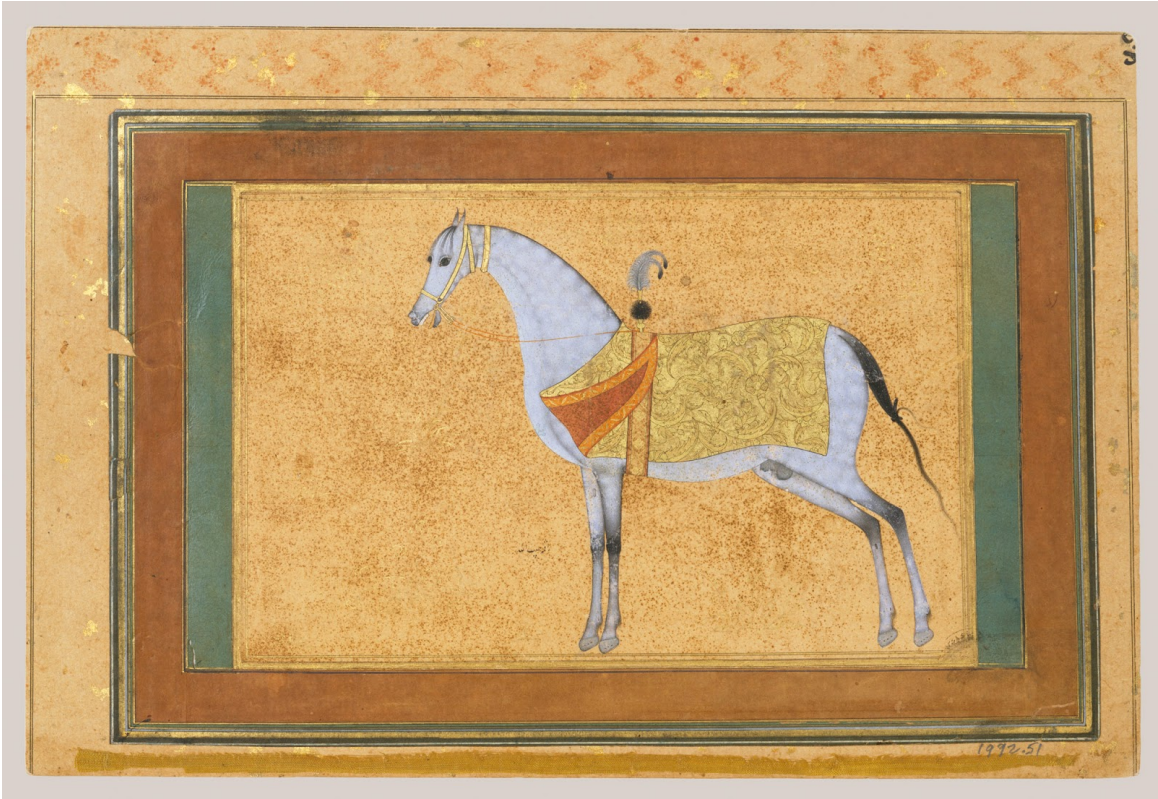

Figure 51: "A Stallion", by Habiballah of Sava, ca. 1601–6, Herat Afghanistan, The Metropolitan Museum

Figure 52: Detail from figure 1, dog

Figure 53: Detail from figure 1, fleeing group of men

Figure 54: Detail from figure 1, the garden fence

Figure 55: Detail from figure 1, the garden gate

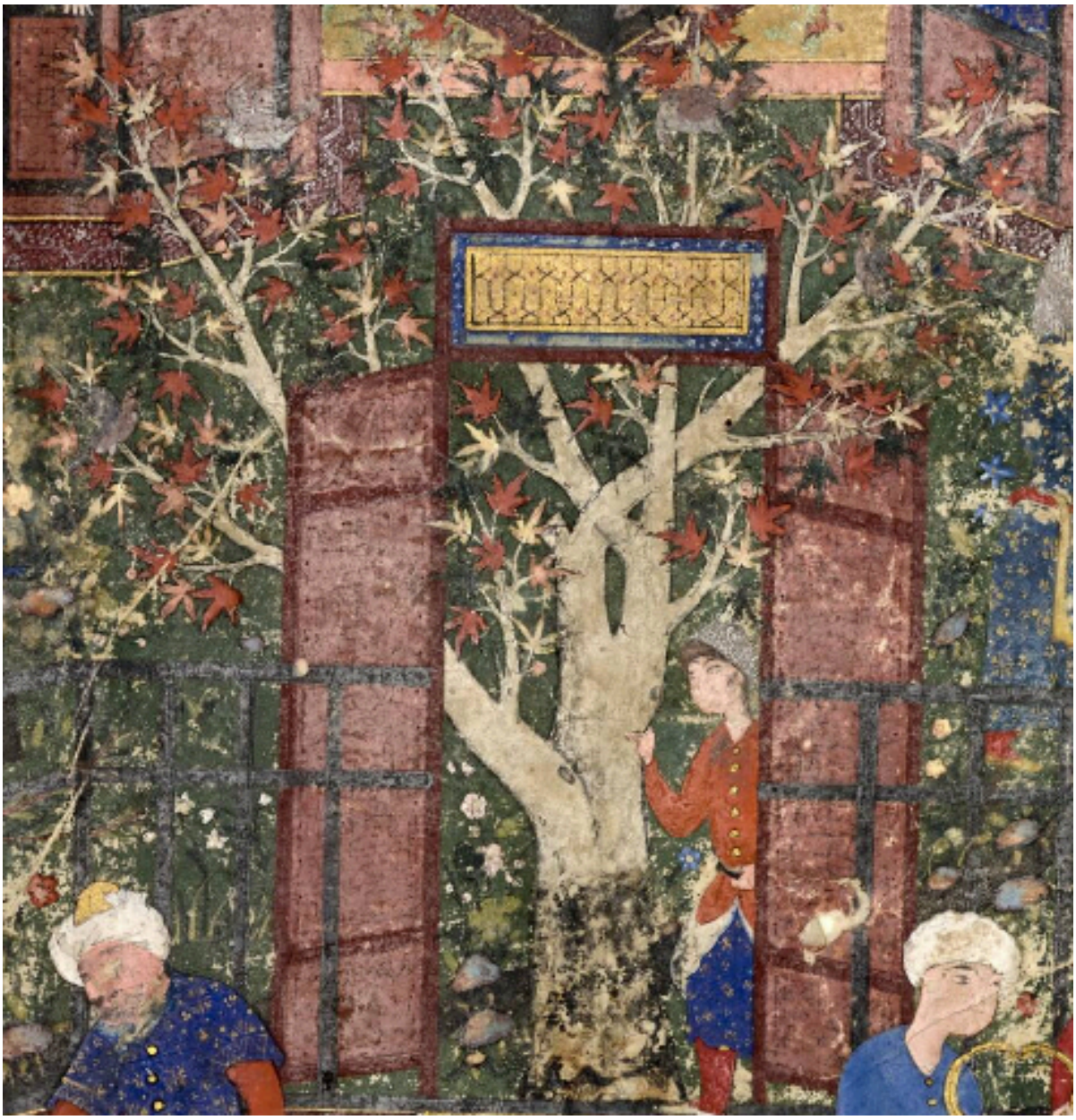

Figure 56: Detail from figure 1, sycamore tree

Figure 57: Detail from figure 1, birds in the sycamore tree

Figure 58: Detail from figure 1, servant with blooms

Figure 59: Detail from figure 1, the stream

Figure 60: Detail from figure 1, gardener one

Figure 61: Detail from figure 1, gardener two

Figure 62: Detail from figure 1, the pavilion on the right

Figure 63: Detail from figure 1, clouds and kestrels

Figure 64: Eurasian kestrel, image courtesy of The National Audubon Society

Figure 65: Detail from figure 1, the pavilion on the left

Figure 66: Detail from figure 1, hexagonal pool

Figure 67: Detail from figure 1, the young and older man

Figure 68: "Saadi in the Rose Garden", by Govardhan, India, ca. 1630-1645 (Freer Gallery of Art)

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